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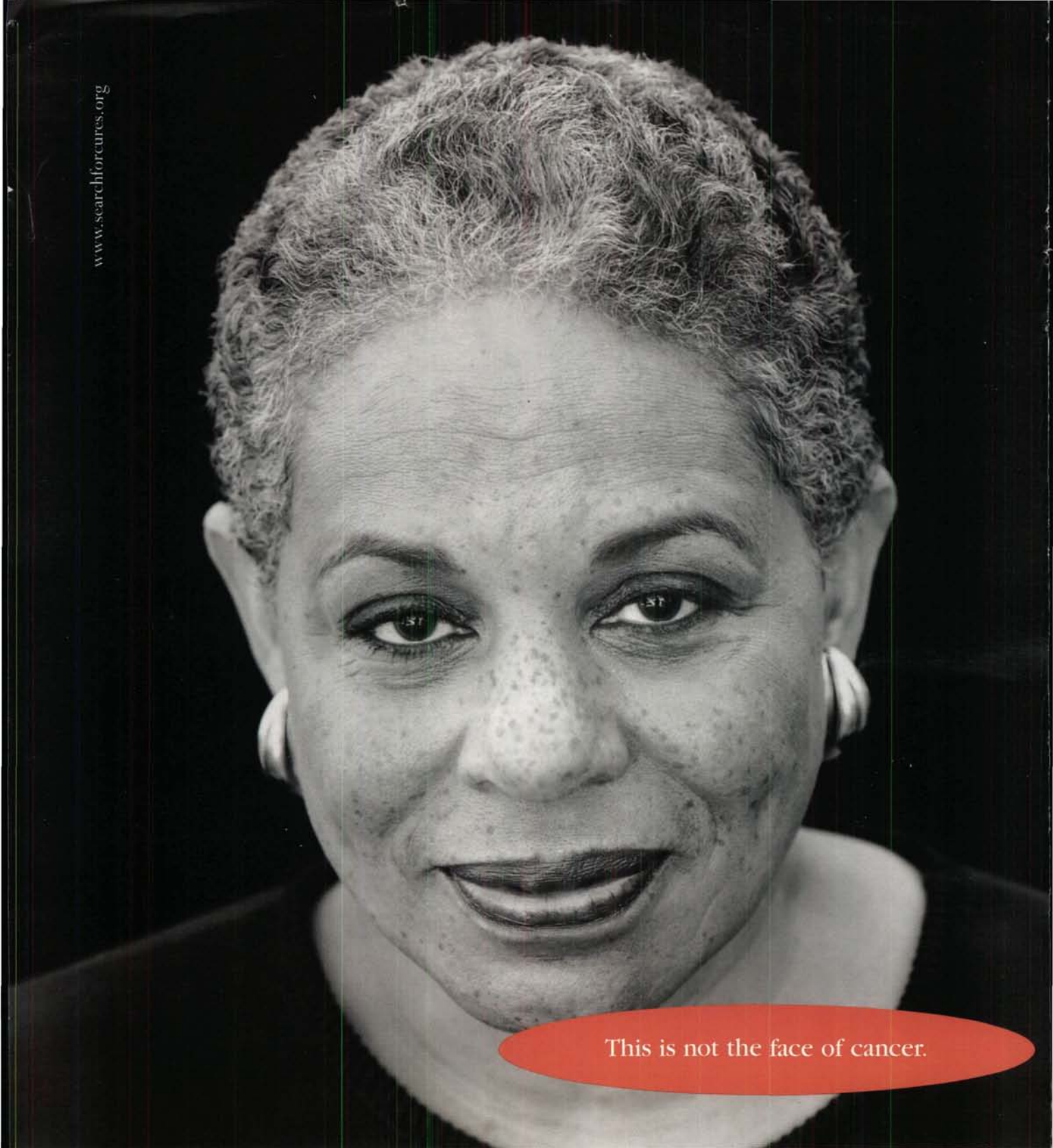

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Cover photo Lennart Nilsson/Albert Bonniers Förlag AB, *A Child is Born*, Dell Publishing Co.

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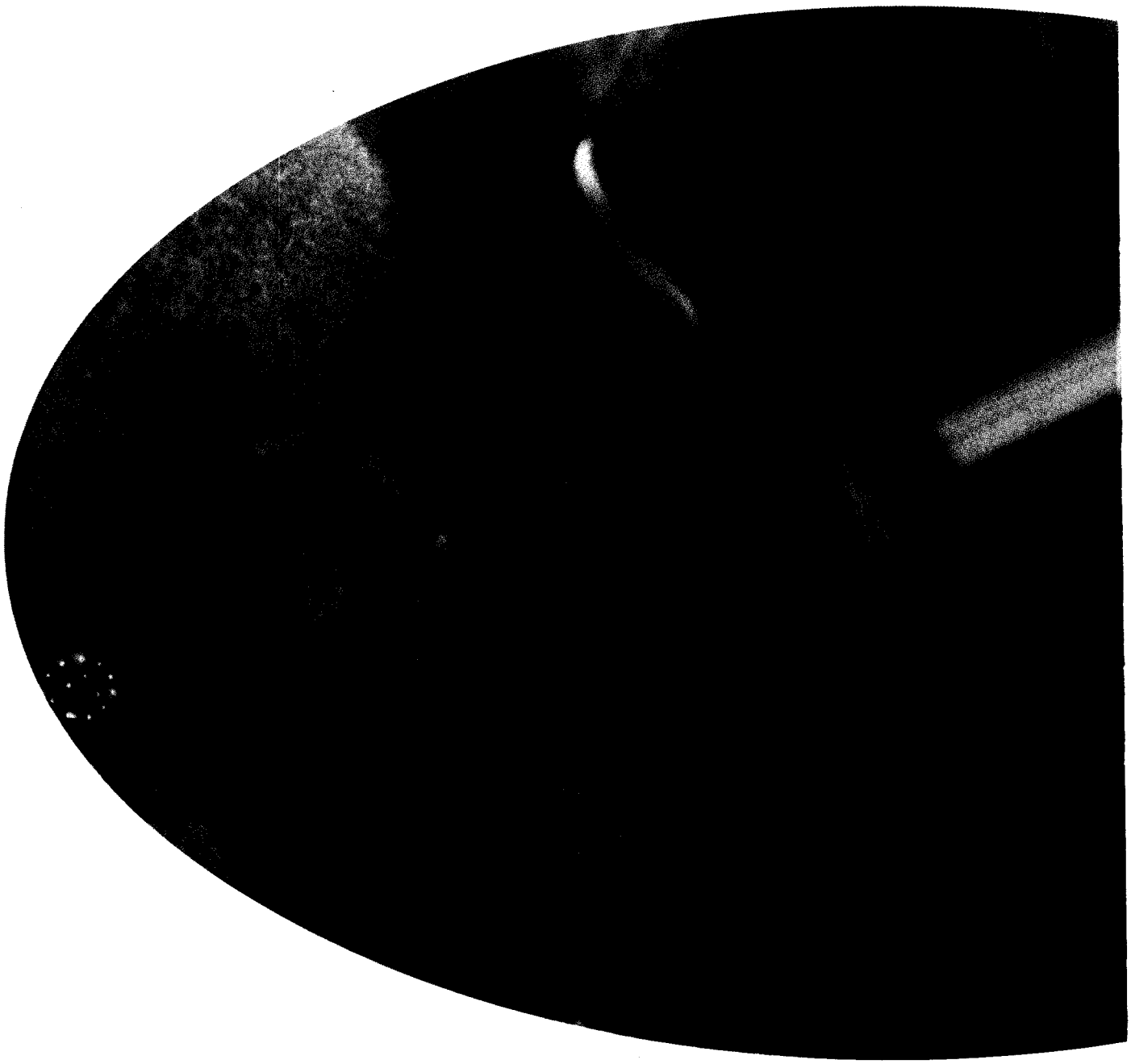

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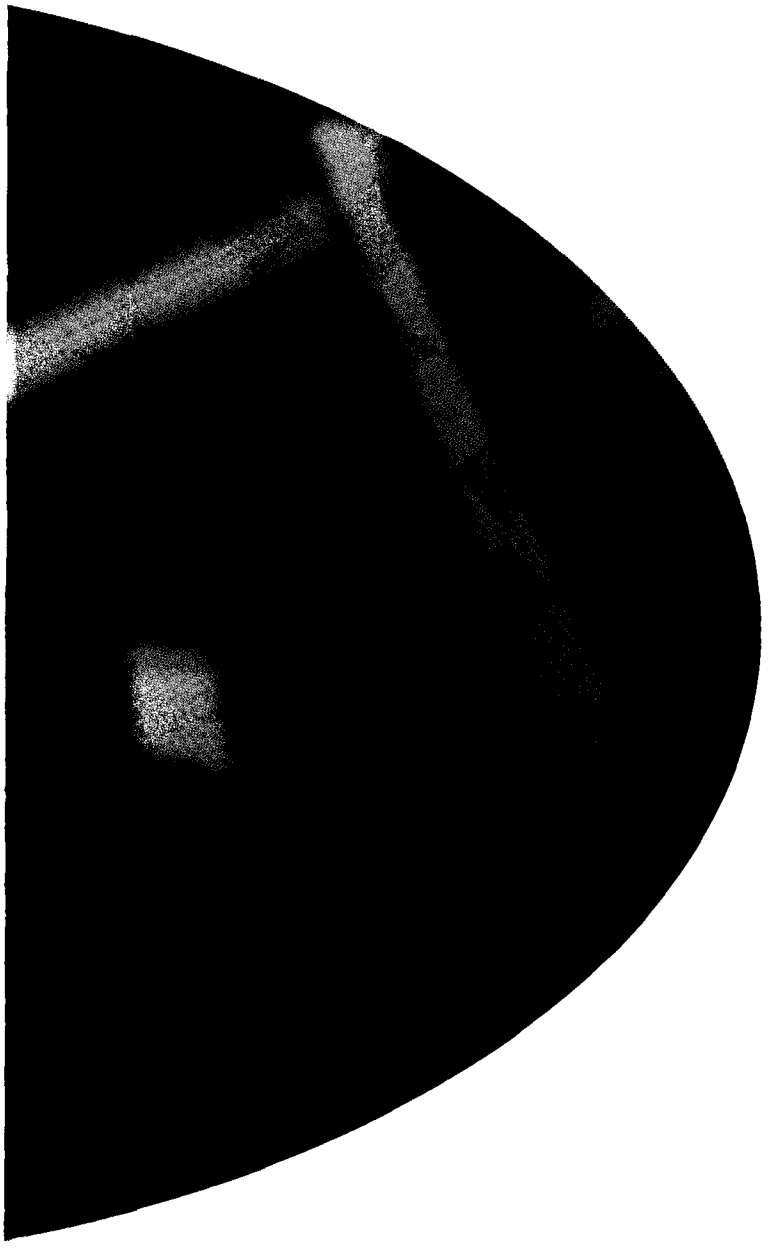

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■ LETTERS ■

FEINSTEIN AND CHINA

I firmly believe, as we debate our nation's relationship with China, that we must keep our eye on the goal of developing a China that is stable, open, respectful of its people, and a leader for peace and security in Asia.

Unfortunately, your article on April 19 ("Princess Di-Fi" by John J. Miller) seriously distorted my position and history on this issue. Attached is a very recent opinion piece written for the *San Jose Mercury News*, which I urge you to publish so your readers can fully understand the importance of engaging China as we seek to achieve these important goals. [That article was published in the *Mercury News* on March 28.]

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Washington, D.C.

We have read your recent article. Shame on Mr. Miller's purported reporting and your fact-checking—the article is full of inaccuracies, almost from the beginning to the end, too numerous to mention in this letter. For the record, let me clarify certain facts about Richard Blum and the investments by Richard C. Blum & Associates, L.P., in China.

(1) Richard C. Blum & Associates has only one investment in China today, and it represents less than one-third of 1 percent of the assets we manage. (2) Our investments in China since Sen. Feinstein has been a United States senator have made almost no money. (3) Richard Blum publicly stated some time ago that if there were any profits from investments in China, he would give his portion to the American Himalayan Foundation, a foundation he started 18 years ago for social, educational, and health-related programs in Tibet. It is patently unfair to smear Mr. Blum's longstanding commitment to Tibet and the AHF, as you did, by quoting an unidentified member of Congress who challenged his commitment.

On another subject, you are correct that Mr. Blum has known Jiang Zemin for 15 years and has met with him many times. At these meetings, Mr. Blum has discussed human, political, and religious rights and autonomy for the Tibetan people. His many trips to meet with the Chinese leaders since 1989 have been to assist the Dalai Lama and his agenda pertaining to Tibet. Many of these meetings have been focused toward arranging direct talks between the Dalai Lama and Jiang Zemin. Unfortunately, to date, these talks have not taken place.

Murray Indick, General Counsel
Richard C. Blum & Associates, L.P.
San Francisco, Calif.

Sen. Feinstein and her husband's lawyer, Mr. Indick, accuse me of writing a "seriously distorted" article "full of inaccuracies." Yet neither of them points to a single factual error. And Mr. Indick's claim that "our investments in China . . . have made almost no money" sounds an awful lot like how the Clintons defend Whitewater. —J.J.M.

LOOK BACK

I'm surprised and disappointed after reading the lead editorial in the April 19 issue ("Don't Look Back"). How can the world's respect for NATO be secured by continuing a policy that was wrong from the start? NR laments that "Republicans have borrowed the language of the Left in making their case against Clinton's policy," but it is NR that has succumbed to the Left's "logic" of pouring resources into a poorly conceived and failing endeavor. What does the future hold when we hear even from the Right that Clinton foreign-policy missteps create vital national interests where none exist?

Jay C. Mumford
Carlisle, Pa.

CORRECTION

Jay Nordlinger's article on drug czar Barry R. McCaffrey ("Clinton's Good Soldier," May 3) inaccurately reported a conversation concerning James R. McDonough, the McCaffrey deputy who in September 1998 published a piece in the *Wall Street Journal* sharply critical of President Clinton. In answer to the question, "Did James McDonough keep his job?," McCaffrey said, "You're darn right he did. Absolutely." He did not say, as the article stated, "You're darn right I did," in answer to a question about prior approval. The word "approve" was not used. McCaffrey in fact said, "I knew about the letter [which in the *Journal* became a piece] and defend his right to express these viewpoints." In answer to the question, "You mean, in advance you knew?," McCaffrey said, "Yes, sir."

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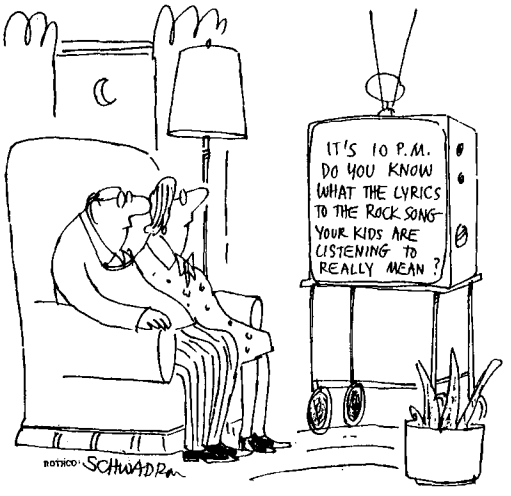
■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ President **Clinton** recalls elementary-school teacher's warning: "She said, 'You know, if you ever learn when to talk and when to keep quiet, there is nothing you can't achieve. But if you don't learn the difference, I'm not sure whether you're going to be governor or wind up in the penitentiary.'". . . Following harsh criticism for miserly conduct last year, Vice President **Gore** boosts charitable giving 4,205 percent in 1998. . . . During its first day up, Gore's campaign website featured "Just for Kids" section that asked children for their names, e-mail addresses, and zip codes. Last year, Clinton signed privacy legislation banning commercial websites from asking kids these questions. Web feature dropped the same day. . . . In Pew poll, 69 percent disagree with statement wishing Clinton could run for third term. . . . Average number of congressional Democrats at Clinton's state dinner, according to *National Journal*: 8.6. Average number of Republicans: 3.3. . . . Historian **Joyce Milton**, on writing a biography of **Hillary Clinton**: "Whenever something surfaced which I thought was merely some canard set by the Clintons' enemies, it turned out to be true." . . . Rep. **Patrick Kennedy** (D., R.I.) requires sutures after cutting his hand aboard Air Force One, faints before addressing Democratic donors. In *Hotline*, Kennedy aides joke it's "part of the vast right-hand conspiracy."

■ In **John Zogby** poll of New Hampshire Republicans, **George W. Bush** holds 23 percent lead over nearest rival, **Elizabeth Dole**. In Zogby's "blind poll"—respondents hear short biographies rather than names—Bush's lead drops to 5 percent. Second-place finisher is Sen. **John McCain** (R., Ariz.). . . . **William Safire**, in *New York Times*: "The key NATO leaders assembling here know that with Clinton's hands frozen on the wheel in this storm, Senator McCain has for weeks been the de facto President of the United States, providing leadership, accepting responsibility." . . . Former **Reagan** advisor **Lyn Nofziger** joins **Pat Buchanan** campaign. . . . **Bill Bradley** receives contributions from **Michael Jordan** (who lists profession as "retired") and *George* editor **JFK Jr.** . . . **Dick Morris**, writing in *New York Post* on Bush and Gore primary campaigns: "Each can be beaten." . . . **Steve Forbes**, discussing the GOP platform's abortion language in interview with Life Issues Institute president **John Willke**: "Leave it alone. You don't impress people by abandoning principle." . . . Forbes on the "death tax": "No taxation without respiration." . . . Schroth & Associates poll finds **Clint Eastwood** and **Donald Trump** trailing Bush but leading Gore in three-way presidential match-ups.



■ Worried that air war against Serbia will eat into federal budget, House majority leader **Dick Armey** wonders whether "tax reduction might need to be addressed in another way." Adds Senate majority leader **Trent Lott**: "The American people need to understand that it's coming out of Social Security." . . . NBC's *Dateline* reports that 53,488 federal workers didn't file or pay their taxes in 1997, totaling nearly $250 million. In the office of the president, more than 7 percent still haven't paid their tax bills from two years ago. . . . New York mayor **Rudy Giuliani**: "I've always felt guilty complaining about taxes" because his father "used to say it's a small price to pay for the freedom that you have in America, and that people should stop complaining about that." . . . Unions that spend heavily on politics have increased giving to Republicans by one-third, to $2 million, since 1996, reports *USA Today*. Democrats, however, still lead with $27 million in contributions.

■ California assemblyman **Tony Strickland** offers bill to produce special-issue license plate featuring Ronald Reagan. . . . Newest naval warship named U.S.S. ***Winston S. Churchill***. . . . ACLU sues Chicago public schools for affiliation with Boy Scouts, saying group's oath to God violates separation of church and state. . . . Children's Scholarship Fund awards 40,000 partial four-year scholarships worth more than $160 million to children from low-income families to help them enroll in private schools.

■ Teheran media make hay with Clinton statement unnoticed by Americans: "I think sometimes it's quite important to tell people, 'Look, you have a right to be angry at something my country or my culture, or others that are generally allied with us today, did to you 50 or 60 or 100 or 150 years ago.'" . . . Bodyguard to **Fidel Castro** reportedly defects during Cuban leader's recent visit to Dominican Republic. . . . Secretary general **Kofi Annan** plans to appoint former British journalist to third-ranking post at United Nations, breaking 33-year-old tradition of having an American in the job. . . . Germany's parliament formally returns to Berlin's Reichstag. . . . Italian supreme court suggests couples can cover car windows with newspaper to avoid breaking public obscenity laws. . . . Egypt repeals 100-year-old law exempting rapists from punishment if they marry victims. . . . For corruption, Pakistani courts disqualify former prime minister **Benazir Bhutto** and her husband from holding public office, in addition to handing out five-year prison sentence and fine of $8.6 million. . . . Vietnam obtains surface-to-surface missiles from North Korea, reports *Jane's Defence Weekly*.

■ Sen. Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) on administration's Kosovo policy: "I supported the bombing, but I think everything else about this operation has been rather pathetic. . . . In terms of preparing for the obvious humanitarian problem that was going to ensue from this, there was better planning for Woodstock." **NR**

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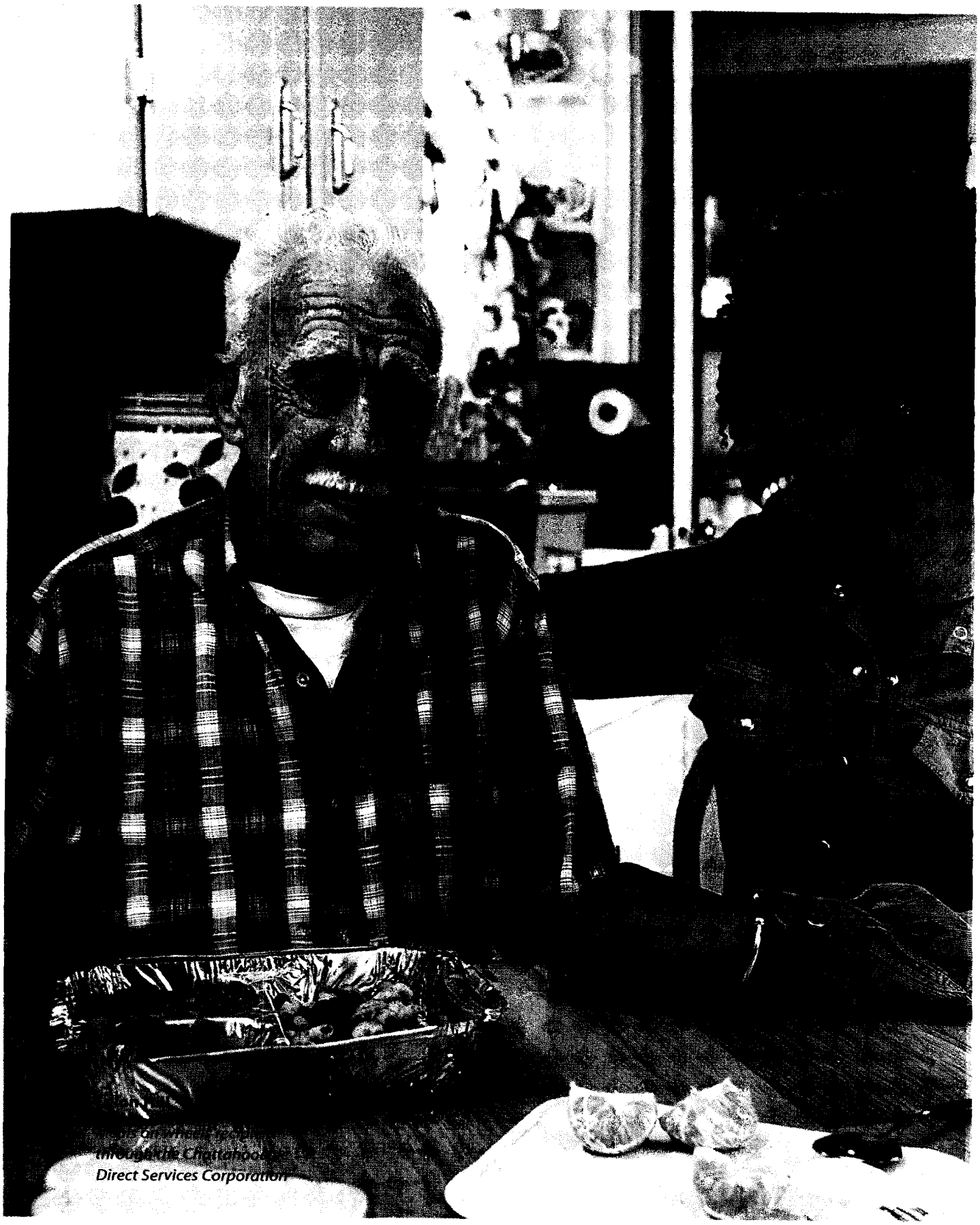

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THE WEEK

■ So we bombed a cigarette factory in Serbia. Is Hillary picking the targets?

■ Bill Bradley is the lone Democrat challenging Al Gore for the 2000 presidential nomination—and he is doing it surprisingly well, for an out-of-work senator up against a sitting vice president. Bradley brings to his boomlet a reputation for brains, and his long-ago record as a Knick. But a man who has the endorsement of both Wall Street honcho Paul Volcker and left-liberal senator Paul Wellstone is not making a clear ideological case, and in the demeanor department, he and Gore are equally—yes—wooden. Bradley's strong suit is that Gore is weak. The temple fundraiser and the posturing at the expense of his family's suffering are black marks on Gore's honesty and character. Gore also shoulders all the luggage of the Clinton administration, from impeachment to Kosovo. No wonder Republicans are beginning to root for him.

■ "I love New York. We have everything in New York that we have in America. I have always been very excited by the dynamism of the people here and the real cutting-edge approach." What is this? A show for tourists in the new Times Square? An ad from the old "I ♥ NY" campaign, beamed back to earth by aliens who picked it up on their antennae? Neither—it is Mrs. Clinton, preparing to run for Daniel Patrick Moynihan's Senate seat. Since one problem with a Hillary campaign is that she has never lived in New York outside of hotels on campaign swings, she has to establish local bona fides (hence that unconvincing "we"). One problem with New Yorkers is that they accept such gross and empty flattery, like drunks in a bar soaking up Sinatra. *Start spreading the news* . . . Arkansans tolerated a lot of corruption, but were they so gullible?

■ Gary Bauer, former head of the Family Research Council, is officially running for president. He is a principled conservative but a longshot candidate, and should therefore run a campaign that advances conservative causes. So, for instance, he could talk about neglected issues such as the need to rein in the imperial judiciary, to inhibit divorce, and to protect the military culture from feminists. He will certainly pressure other candidates to promise to do everything in their power to reduce and restrict abortion. An even greater service, however, would be to guide social conservatives away from certain sirens: protectionism on trade, isolationism on foreign policy, an unqualified embrace of partnerships between the churches and the welfare state. If he does that, and refrains from picking gratuitous fights with economic conservatives on issues such as Social Security, he will prove that his campaign concerns more than himself—which would put him ahead of several candidates the handicappers now prefer.

■ At a March 19 news conference in the wake of revelations of Chinese spying at Los Alamos, President Clinton told reporters, "It is my understanding that the investigation has not yet determined for sure that espionage occurred." Actually, the Energy Department had concluded that Chinese espionage not only occurred but saved China years of research. At the time, however, the administration was still engaged in the delicate work of trying to ignore evidence of Chinese spying; a Los Alamos scientist kept his access to nuclear secrets nearly three years after he was identified as a suspect in the case. So the CIA was apparently leaned on to find that nothing untoward had happened—the line Clinton echoed at his news conference. Now, yet another administration report confirms the original suspicions. And Johnny Chung has told investigators that the chief of China's military intelligence gave him $300,000 to pass along to the 1996 Clinton campaign. According to Chung, the official explained, "We like your president." Wonder why.

■ President Clinton's phony Social Security plan—really an accounting gimmick—was obviously designed to block tax cuts and to let him blame Republicans for not saving the program. The blame campaign has begun now that the *New York Times* has reported that Republicans are giving up on Social Security reform for this Congress. Actually, the House leaders have merely decided not to get behind a deeply flawed bill crafted by Republican representatives Bill Archer of Texas and Clay Shaw of Florida. (The Archer-Shaw proposal would increase Social Security's claim on tax dollars, and individuals would not be able in any meaningful sense to manage or even own the plan's "individual accounts.") It's probably just as well that the leadership will not have a bill; we're still in the let-a-thousand-flowers-bloom phase of reform. A bipartisan group of legislators including Sens. Moynihan, Kerrey, and Breaux will be introducing its own bill soon. Meanwhile, House whip Tom DeLay is preparing to launch a p.r. campaign when Republicans do endorse a plan. Great—as long as Republicans understand that gaining credibility on the issue requires that they keep their promise not to borrow from Social Security for other purposes. Kosovo should be paid for by spending cuts. Republicans unwilling to make such cuts aren't going to have the courage to take on Social Security anyway.

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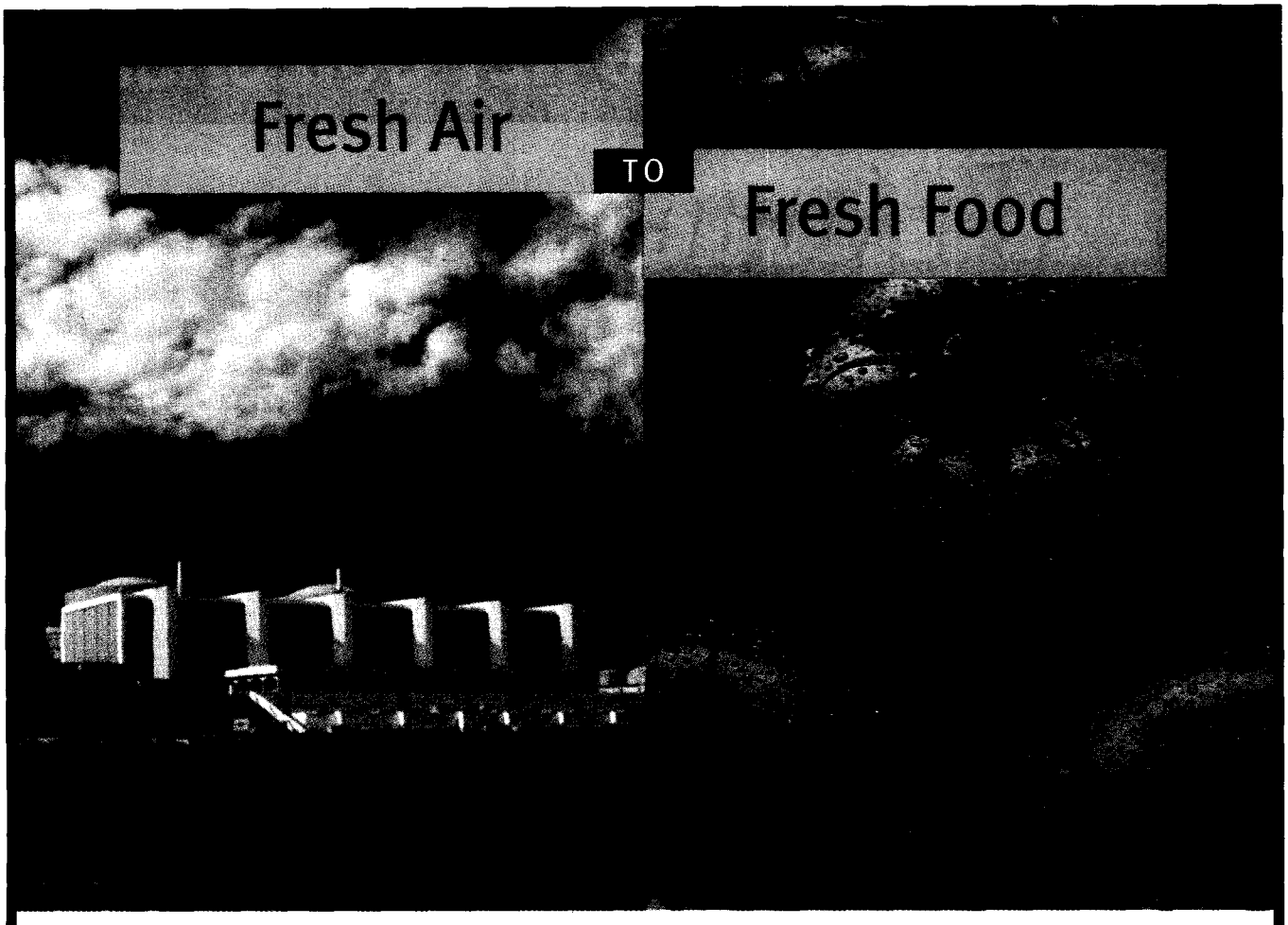

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Do it before another single cabin—maybe the one you want—is gone (120 staterooms and suites have already been sold, and more orders are coming in every day!).

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NR is giving this popular tour (adorned with enough bells and whistles that it's worth $400!) to Europe's historic metropolis to the first 250 people who sign up for the cruise. We'd hate for you to be person 251!

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In addition to a great vacation, the **National Review 1999 Baltic Cruise** features numerous exclusives: seven seminars starring Bill Buckley and a cast of American "Cold War" heroes, three cocktail receptions (a great opportunity for schmoozing with our guests, and your new-found friends), three late-night "smokers" (they're your chance to enjoy world-class cigars), and several nights of intimate dining with *NR* editors and celebrities.

It sounds great, and it is. Why not join us and find out for yourself why *National Review* cruises provide the kind of experience that can only be described as "once in a lifetime."

Get the facts about the **National Review 1999 Baltic Cruise** at **www.tcacruise.com/nr99**. Or call **1-800-548-2184** to order your free Baltic Cruise Information Kit—rest assured, we'll send it to you pronto!

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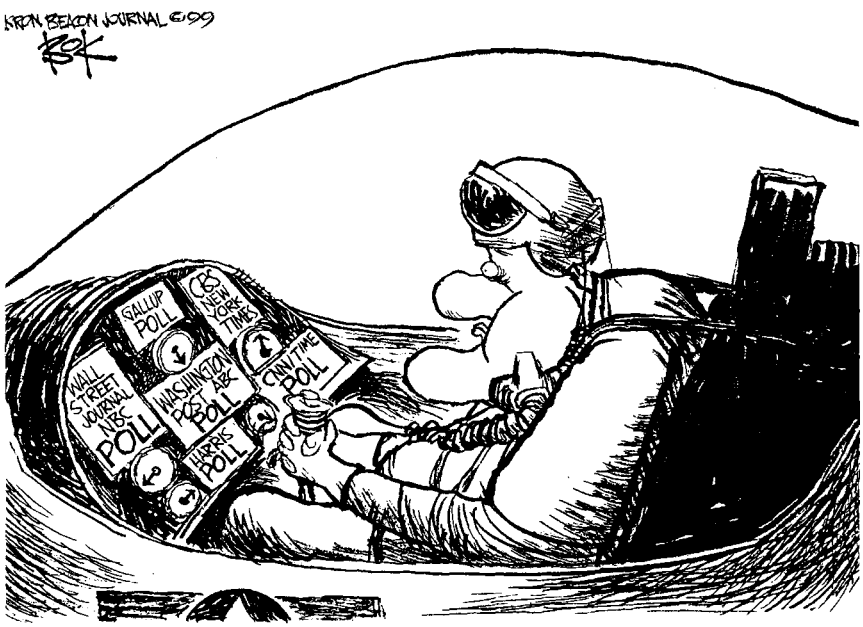
■ Democrats are grumbling about Sen. Robert Torricelli's co-sponsorship of Republican Paul Coverdell's "Small Savers" tax-cut plan. The legislation expands the 15 percent tax bracket by $10,000, excludes the first $500 in interest and dividend income from taxes, and exempts the first $5,000 in long-term capital gains from capital-gains taxes. Torricelli's fellow Democrats are complaining that his support for this modest plan contradicts the party's claims about "reckless" tax cutting. Retorts Torricelli, "Nobody told me when I became a Democrat that that involved opposition to lower taxes." Plenty of other Democrats haven't been clued in either. According to a recent poll by John Zogby, 74 percent of likely Democratic voters support an across-the-board tax cut. At the moment it seems that there is more support for tax cuts among rank-and-file Democrats than among Republican congressmen.

■ The Supreme Court is currently hearing four cases involving the Americans with Disabilities Act. One case is hailed by lawyers as *Brown* v. *Board of Education* for the disability-rights movement because it could force the public to foot the bill for moving countless mental-health patients out of institutional settings and into costlier group homes. In other cases, the court will consider whether people with high blood pressure, near-sightedness, or blindness in one eye can qualify as disabled. The sloppiness of the legislation makes such judicial lawmaking inevitable. But it is also true that liberals trying to extend the reach of the Americans with Disabilities Act suffer from what Walter Olson of the Manhattan Institute calls a "reverse Lake Wobegon" complex: They want everyone to be rated below-average.



■ On April 15, of all days, the IRS called Houston agent Jennifer Long in from the field. Her supervisors informed her that she had 60 days to improve her job performance or be fired. But Long had repeatedly earned "fully successful" job ratings during a 16-year career at the IRS. This stopped only when she testified, in 1997 Senate hearings, that IRS officials often fabricate evidence against the people they are investigating. Looks like that's one practice that hasn't changed.

■ The biggest Y2K problem may come from lawyers trying to hold companies liable for innocent glitches. *Legal Times* reports that "virtually every" major law office in Washington, D.C., has set up a Y2K litigation team, and many lawyers believe those teams can keep themselves busy for years. Total liability could exceed $1 trillion. With that in mind, a bipartisan group has offered a bill to protect companies that make good-faith efforts. It would also block vague "fishing expedition" lawsuits, prevent plaintiffs who have not suffered harm from hitting the jackpot, and force lawyers to make a full disclosure of their fees to clients. Liberal Democrats oppose the measure because the trial lawyers stand to reap a windfall. This is one doomsday scenario Congress should act to prevent.

■ The Atlantic Alliance's colossal 50th-anniversary summit bash was well organized and well executed—unlike the war in Kosovo, the *Washington Post* couldn't help noting. When Soviet Communism fell, the obsolescence of NATO was widely proclaimed. Now, as Europe enters a new century in more precarious condition than most expected, the organization that provides security is not the U.N., not the EU, not the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, but NATO. Of course there are cracks in the solidarity—notably, disagreements over NATO's role outside of western Europe. But the Atlantic Alliance remains a success story of American policy. It extends our influence, unites our friends, and expands the zone of freedom. If it fails in Kosovo, it won't be the Europeans' fault. The question is not whether NATO is good for America, but whether the alliance will be discredited by the incompetence of its (American) leadership.

■ The International Monetary Fund, having sped financial collapse in Indonesia and Russia, now wants to sell part of its $30 billion gold reserve to reduce the huge debt of the world's poorest nations. What's the catch? Selling billions of dollars in gold could depress prices, cutting revenue for many poor countries that count gold as a major export. When they feel the pinch, they're likely to turn to the West for more loans. But the Clinton administration insists the IMF is up to the task. If Congress approves, deputy Treasury secretary Lawrence Summers told a House panel, "the IMF would take steps aimed at ensuring that any gold sales be conducted in a manner that limits any adverse impact on gold holders, producers, and the gold market." Better call your broker.

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■ Under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, the U.S. reserves the right to sell Taiwan weapons "of a defensive character." We know the Clinton administration interprets this as narrowly as possible, so as not to offend its friends in Beijing. Advanced theater ballistic-missile defenses are therefore excluded. Now, apparently, even defensive early-warning *radars* are excluded. According to the *Washington Times*, the administration will not let Taiwan buy some types of long-range radars that could provide warning of a Chinese missile launch. Apparently an offensive weapon is one that offends Beijing.

■ A new study, reported in *Science*, was unable to find any "gay genes" where earlier studies had suggested they might be. Social conservatives cheered the finding, believing that it undercuts the claim that gays are "just born that way" and cannot be faulted for their choices. In truth, neither side in the culture wars should worry about what's in the science journals. An impulse can be felt as a compulsion whether it has genetic or environmental origin. Moreover, neither the origin nor the intensity of the impulse determines the morality of acting on it. The key question is whether homosexual conduct is in itself immoral. The political effects of research are not easily predicted: Proof of genetic causation of homosexuality could be used, monstrously, to facilitate the abortion of gay-leaning fetuses. Critics of the campaign to normalize homosexuality should remember that it has succeeded less because of scientific developments than because of the collapse of sexual restraint generally. We need no genetic explanation for that.

■ Wayne Gretzky, known as "The Great One" since he was a child hockey phenomenon in Ontario, has retired. His career statistics were unequalled in history. He played with speed and skill, eschewing fan-pleasing brutality. In his grace he bears comparison with Michael Jordan, also recently retired, with John Elway, soon to retire, and with the universally mourned Joe DiMaggio. All led their public lives as gentlemen, and were not only admired but loved. America still recognizes the good.

Al Gore's Situation

He's switched from suits to sweaters
And wears a fuzzy smile
When chatting with the matrons
Across a country stile;
But Bradley's busy digging
Like dwarfs stuck on Snow White,
While any talk of ground troops
Turns tummy muscles tight.

—W. H. von Dreele

LITTLETON I

Asking Why

The murders in Littleton, Colorado, and their grotesque perpetrators, offered a social and political Rorshach test, as legions of commentators rolled out their favorite demons to explain the tragedy.

The most popular cause was guns, with even the NRA scaling back a convention in Denver as if conceding the point. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold used semiautomatic weapons, a favorite target of gun controllers, to get off quick shots. But they also relied on shotguns and homemade pipe bombs, built out of propane cylinders and crushed glass. Most important, they relied on the element of surprise, the key advantage of the violent, whether they use fists or firepower.

Runner-up in the field of possible causes was the culture. Critics had trouble deciding which subculture to blame. Early reports described the killers as fans of "Goth" music—songs about death, whose devotees favor black clothes, metal jewelry, and corpse-like makeup. Soon this was refined to industrial music (the lyrics are even more anomic, though the fans eschew makeup). Or maybe the killers were warped by the amount of time they spent online, posting homicidal webpages.

Lawmakers will feel the need to do something to prevent future Littletons. Surely school dress codes are a good idea—not only to damp the self-indulgent angst of trench-coat mafias, but also to restrain the preening of jocks. Cliques there will always be, but they do not have to set a school's tone, visual or otherwise. But good ideas—another would be to encourage production codes in the music industry—would still be good if there were never any Littleton massacres. Vain ideas, such as disarming the American populace, would still be futile even if there were a massacre every month.

Not all violence erupts from cliques. Mass movements can organize murder on a large scale, and broad social conditions can be the breeding grounds of discrete horrors. But until we find new natures, every generation must face its Littletons. Even better than the support of friends and shrinks is the wisdom of the ages, which, though offering slight support, at least will not cheat. When we discuss the problem of evil, wrote Samuel Johnson, we "imagine that we are going forward when we are only turning round. . . . All our effort ends in belief, that for the evils of life there is some good reason, and in confession, that the reason cannot be found." Bleak; but then, so, all too often, is life.

LITTLETON II

Murder-Spree-TV

When a student trapped in Columbine High School picked up his cellular phone and called his local NBC affiliate, KUSA-TV, the Denver station kept him on for several

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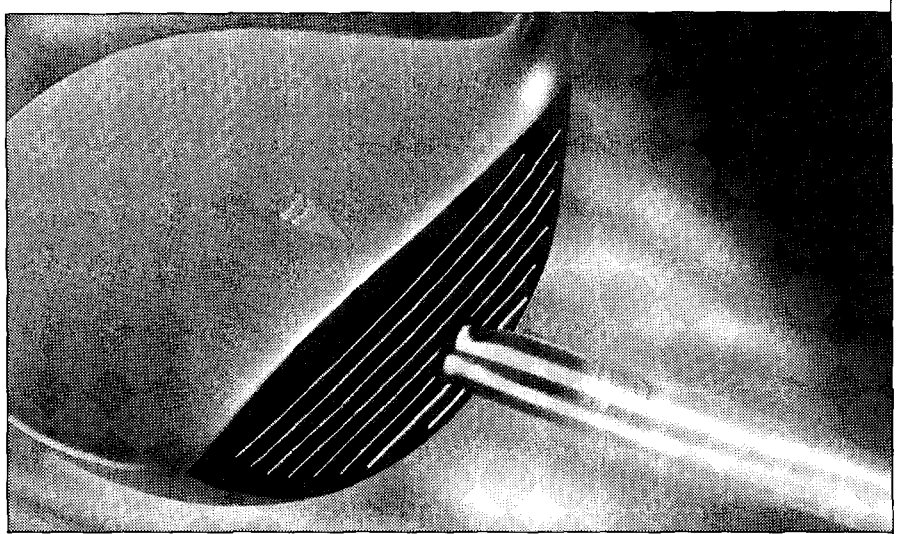
Hardest metal in golf flattens bullets, adds yards

Metal used on fighter aircraft, armor-piercing shells, bullet-proof vests

Out-guns titanium and steel drivers by 25 to 30 yards.



Once-secret Armor Pierce Metal used by law enforcement officers to harden bullet-proof vests. Withstands force of a 9-mm bullet. Metal's extreme hardness adds yards in golf.

SAN DIEGO, CA-- Golf has commandeered a new metal developed by the military to protect fighter planes and pierce enemy armor. Federal law enforcement officers recently discovered it too. They tested it on a bullet-proof vest and it stopped a 9 mm bullet in its tracks; the vest's regular material couldn't stop a 9 mm.

By Charlie Allen

Now golf has discovered it. An ex-Navy engineer who used to apply the metal to the tips of torpedoes has put it on a golf driver called the Condor Armor Pierce. The club's a bonanza for golfers. Its extreme hardness can whack a ball 25 to 30 yards farther off the tee.

A number of pros are testing the metal, including a former U.S. Open champion, a former Masters champion, two of the top 25 money-winners on the PGA Tour and one of the longest hitters on the Senior Tour.

There are some dramatic stories from regular golfers who have tested the club, but the most powerful one was a in letter from a golfer handicapped with an artificial leg. He wrote that he hit a 320 yard drive with the club, cut six strokes off his score and out-hit his pro, who uses a titanium driver.

Then there's my own story. While watching an independent lab test the club on a hitting machine I suggested that the machine be set at 120 MPH, a speed attained by long-ball champs, to see how far it would go. The club's new metal broke the ball. The lab technicians had never seen that before. One of the club's developers told me this.

"It's two-plus-two that the harder you hit a ball, the father it goes, and our Armor Piercing Metal whacks a golf ball like a battering ram. There is zero loss of energy at impact because, unlike steel and titanium, it doesn't give. Remember, Armor Pierce Metal was developed because steel and titanium were too soft to penetrate enemy tanks and ships. Now, tests by federal agents prove that it can save lives, too, by stopping bullets that current bullet-proof vests can't protect against.

"The new metal boosts control as well. For example, on a steel and titanium driver an off-center shot will slide toward the toe or heel and accelerate the hook or slice spin that has already begun. The Condor's Armor Pierce Metal has hidden 'claws' that brake these spins by holding the ball on the face of the club four times longer. This braking action tames abnormal spins and prevents off-center

"...the harder it's hit, the farther it goes"

shots from whirling off into the rough. It also lets a golfer draw and fade the ball with uncanny control– a great advantage on dog legs and for getting around trees. The extra holding power also gives shots a lower trajectory that bores the ball into the wind and gives it a much longer roll. The club outdoes the tri-metal clubs by a factor of two. There are six metals in the Armor Pierce Metal's formula. We have a patent pending on it.

"In the hands of a master the club is a sheer joy to watch. We looked on, eyes popping, while a former Master's champ drew and faded 325-yard shots as if he were playing a 5-iron. The performance was so awesome it attracted a group of his peers curious about what he was playing."

"...hidden claws brake abnormal spins"

If you're looking for something truly new, take a look at the Condor Armor Pierce driver. It's not in stores, but you can call **1-800-285-3900** anytime or day for home or office delivery. Or send a check (or cc number and exp, date) to NGC Golf **(Dept. TC-187)**, 60 Church St., Yalesville, CT 06492.

The graphite shaft model costs only $149.00 (that's hundreds below titanium drivers); the top-of-the-line TurboTip graphite model with a big butt grip costs $179.00. Three and 5-woods cost only $129.00 (graphite) and $159.00 each (TurboTip), when you order the driver. Add $12.95 s/h. CT and NY add sales tax. Choose from regular or stiff flex, right of left-handed, men's or ladies'. A refund is guaranteed, if you return your order within 90-days.

If you're a long-ball champ, take extra balls when you test it.

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minutes. What was he hearing, how was he feeling? Afterward, the anchor turned to the camera and asked, philosophically, "Why would a student trapped in a school shooting call his local television station instead of 911?" The more pertinent question is, Why would a television station put a student in such a position on the air, potentially endangering his life? KUSA-TV later defended itself by saying that the 911 lines were busy and that it only meant to help. But why couldn't the station have "helped" off the air? Presumably, that would not have made good TV.

"This . . . is the first . . . interactive school shooting!" newscasters would later gush. In the days that followed, Katie Couric would speak to a Littleton student who read a farewell letter she wrote to her parents when she thought she was about to die. Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, and Charles Gibson would soon follow suit, interviewing grieving parents and baffled students who shared with us their every emotion.

In 1971, Irving Kristol penned an essay in which he noted that we all agree we wouldn't broadcast around the world someone who is "dying an agonizing death." He wrote, "Now, it would be, technically, the easiest thing in the world to put a television camera in his hospital room and let the whole world witness this spectacle. We do not do it—at least we do not do it as yet—because we regard this as an *obscene* invasion of privacy. And what would make the spectacle obscene is that we would be witnessing the extinguishing of humanity in a human animal."

Well, now we do it. Dr. Kevorkian killing one of his "patients" makes for good TV, and so does a trapped student who may be murdered at any second. Imagine: If a door had opened and the student talking to KUSA-TV had been murdered right then and there, it would have been the first interactive school murder!

Students are not stupid, and they pay attention to what captures our attention. The repeated school massacres may have no ready explanation, but it cannot help that our media revel in them.

KOSOVO

Arms and the Man

THREE decades after his draft board came calling, Bill Clinton goes to war. What have been the defining traits of the Kosovo operation so far?

1. *Speaking loudly.* Madeleine Albright, as one aide put it, led her colleagues to a face-off over Kosovo "through rhetoric." Once the shooting started, Clinton was comparing Slobodan Milosevic to Hitler. It is not whitewashing Milosevic, as some anti-warriors are now doing, to point out that there are many rungs of brutality below Hitler.

2. *Paltry means.* NATO has committed far fewer planes to its air war than the anti-Iraq coalition fielded at the beginning of the Gulf War (400 this March, versus 2,700 in 1991). Many of NATO's sorties—80 percent of them, in the early weeks of the fighting—were directed at repeat targets, making the rubble bounce, while many of these targets—police barracks, Milosevic's party HQ, a cigarette factory—were marginal, to say the least. Under this blizzard of pinpricks, the Yugoslav army introduced 7,000 more troops into Kosovo and controls the treetop level with low-flying ground-attack planes and helicopter gunships.

3. *No hard blows.* Meanwhile, major targets remain untouched. NATO destroyed oil refineries in Serbia early on, but the port of Bar in Montenegro remained open to oil shipments. "We cannot tell our pilots to fly high-risk missions against petroleum storage facilities . . . and then let this other oil creep in," declared Sen. John Warner. But that is exactly what we have been doing. Only at NATO's 50th birthday celebration in Washington was it decided to search in-bound ships in the Adriatic.

4. *Too many cooks.* During the first week of the war, every target needed the approval of officers from each of 19 allied nations. "I've got two arms and one leg tied behind my back," NATO commander Gen. Wesley Clark complained of his many kibitzers. Clark got more flexibility—but only after the shock effect of the first strike had been wasted.

5. *Mixed signals.* The president ruled out ground troops from the first—"I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war," he said on March 24—a disastrous admission, even if it was his plan all along. Know the mind of your enemy, said the Chinese military theorist Sun-Tzu; don't tell him yours, says common sense. Later on, the United States agreed to take 20,000 Kosovar refugees—why, if we are determined to restore their homes?—though Vice President Gore insisted, without much conviction, that they will be "prepared to return on short notice."

6. *Side issues.* In the absence of serious action, distractions flourish. NATO has been bogged down in such questions as whether it struck a civilian train or a refugee convoy. Meanwhile, the administration courts capitulation by inviting Russian mediation with Milosevic.

War by its nature encompasses surprise and failure. American troops were mauled at Kasserine Pass, shortly after they were introduced in North Africa in World War II. It took Lincoln years to find a good general. The fighting around New York from

STRATEGIST OR DEAD DUCK?

Couture'd in a power hat,
Albright said the Serbs would scat
Once the missiles landed (Pow!);
Now the most persistent Ow!
Comes from Clinton as the mob
Surges in with every lob.
It's a bitch amidst the gloom
Searching for some wiggle room.

—W. H. VON DREELE

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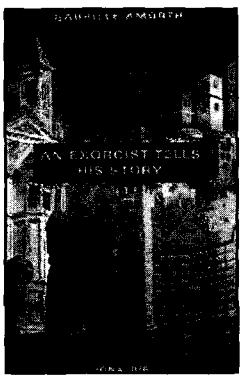
Satan — Alive and Well

Books Reveal How the "Father of Lies" is Hard at Work as Year 2000 Approaches



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NR-EXO

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August to October of 1776 was disastrous for the Patriots. The United States surmounted these debacles on a powerful if inchoate popular sense of what was at stake, aided by articulate formulations of the cause. The administration's inability to make its case and to lead is perhaps its greatest military failure. Without a sense of purpose, we become mesmerized by the fog of war.

The ultimate reason we are adrift is that President Clinton feels he is in over his head. No doubt he is. But he had better pull himself up if he hopes to carry on to victory.

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: I write in reference to your demanding an intern in exchange for running against Hillary Clinton to replace Sen. Moynihan. I fervently hope that thousands of comely women have now offered their services. But on the almost unimaginable chance that there has not been a single female candidate, then for the sake of our United States, I volunteer myself to serve as your personal love toy, if you will please oppose Ms. Rodham.

I know that you'll want to know what I look like, so my photo is enclosed. I'm in the single-stripe shirt. The man holding the rugby ball is my dear *zaydeh* Nyman, of blessed memory.

I'm really very bitter about your forcing me into this position. I had always hoped, were I ever to know physical intimacy, that it would be with a woman. In contrast to some I could name, however, I value America far more than my own carnal preferences. To this end, I'm trying to imagine something I would *not* do to keep that Medusa out of the U.S. Senate.

I envy Nathan Hale. He only had to give his life.

Reluctantly yours,
Roger P. Glass
Falls Church, Va.

Dear Mr. Glass: I'll tell you what: I'll give you up as intern, but your assignment will be to seduce the opposition. Okay?

Cordially, WFB

■ Memo to: Bill
From: Linda [Bridges]

In the unlikely event you didn't see it, here's from the April 26 *Time* mag, under their logo, "NUMBERS":

"**44th** Position at which *National Review* placed owner William F. Buckley's *God & Man at Yale* on a list of the century's 100 best nonfiction books.

45th Position at which the magazine placed *Selected Essays* by T. S. Eliot."

Dear Linda: Yes, I saw it, very amusing. What made it all the more piquant was that I saw the note in *Time* mag *before* I saw it in NATIONAL REVIEW. The fruits (and the perils) of absentee ownership!

XX Bill

■ Dear Bill: I think we both believe that words count. As such, I was struck by the use of the word "murder" in relation to Mr. Diallo, which appeared on page 34 of the April 19 issue of NATIONAL REVIEW.

I think John O'Sullivan's treatment of the case is excellent. I might say that I agree wholeheartedly with what he says, but I do think he vitiates his point when he describes the case as murder.

Sincerely,
Thomas L. Kempner
New York, N.Y.

Dear Tom: D'accord. There has to be mens rea to do murder, I'd say. But we can both hear the prosecutor use the word, can't we?

Cordially, Bill

■ Dear William F. Buckley Jr.: Congratulations! We have reserved your name, WilliamFBuckleyJr.com, for you on our nation's "information superhighway." This is a great chance for you to have your own website for all the world to see. If you wish us to help you develop this exciting new opportunity, please contact us.

If instead you want us to transfer the domain name to you, we can do this at the amazingly low price of $200. In this way you protect yourself from those who would exploit your name without scruples.

Sincerely yours,
Craig Erb, President
21st Century Fax
San Jose, Calif.

Dear Mr. Erb: Thanks very much, but you can keep my website. I'll stick with www.nationalreview.com.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: In reading your column recently, I noted that you included a Latin quote, *Quid Jovi licet, non bovi licet*, which you translate as "What is okay for the gods to do is not okay for the swine to do." My daughter and I have been learning Latin (from the *Ecce Romani* series), and we think it means "not okay for cattle" (swine would be *porci*, I think). But we applaud your using Latin, as it gives us a chance to try out our translating skills!

With best wishes,
Sue Grant
Northampton, Mass.

Dear Mrs. Grant: Glad you approve. I used "swine" instead of cattle because I think it swings better that way, if you see what I mean. By the way, it's *Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi*. Also by the way, I know practically *no* Latin. But I like to play with it every now and then.

Cordially, —WFB

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Do You Make Embarrassing "Gaffes" When You Speak?

Are "Verbal Booby Traps" Bringing Your Career to a Screeching Halt... Roadblocking Your Way to a Higher Income...Sabotaging Your Social Success?

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■ THE WAR ■

Unfinished Business

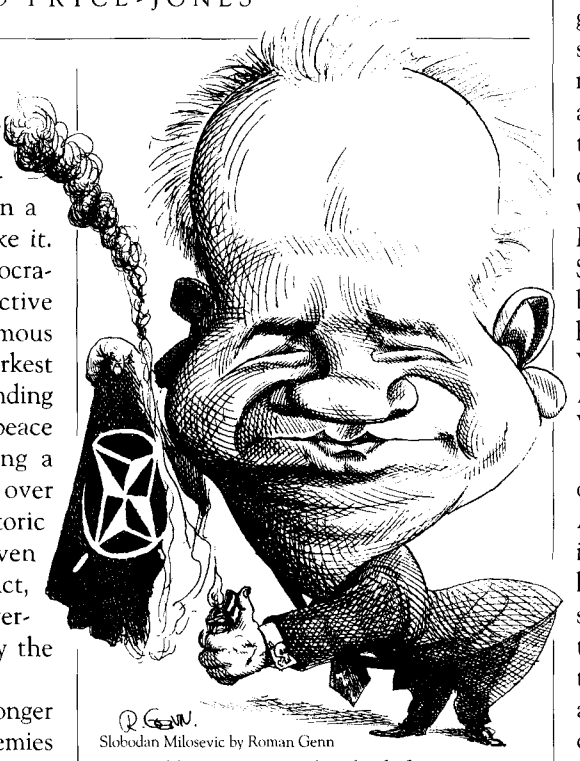
The stakes for NATO.

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

THE North Atlantic Treaty Organization ought to be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in a mood of self-congratulation. There has never been a voluntary alliance of countries like it. NATO defended the values of democracy, self-determination, and collective security, as enshrined in the famous Atlantic Charter signed in the darkest days of the Second World War. Standing for the West as a whole, it kept the peace throughout the Cold War, playing a major part in the victory over Communism. That was a historic achievement. Lately, it has even enrolled members of the Warsaw Pact, the defunct Soviet alliance, the adversary that used to promise to bury the West.

Now, when Communism is no longer a threat in Europe and no other enemies are in view, NATO has gone to war against President Milosevic of Serbia, a former Communist. Unexpected doubt and anticlimax are clouding what might otherwise have been its moment of clear triumph. Events are unfolding whose end is unforeseeable. Milosevic and NATO cannot both be winners but they can both be losers. Boundaries in the Balkans are at stake, but more important, so are identities.

Abortion or failure of the NATO endeavor will call into question the future of the alliance, and the status of the West as a whole. Yet President Clinton and other NATO leaders have so far been unable to define what success in this war would actually be, or in what situation Serbia, Kosovo, and Milosevic himself are supposed to be left at its conclusion. Underfoot, the world is beginning to rock with seismic political tremors. "You engage," as Napoleon, that expert in starting wars, liked to say, "and then you see."



Slobodan Milosevic by Roman Genn

The issue is wretched unfinished business from the age of ideology. In their day, Hitler and Stalin monstrously contrived to reshuffle the populations of Europe, with the result that its peoples for the first time became more or less uniform, each a nation-state within boundaries. Minorities had been killed off, deported, or exiled. In western Europe, Yugoslavia was the sole exception. A peculiar and idiosyncratic version of Communism forced the various Yugoslav peoples into a federation that obliged them to live as they had immemorially, in an ethnic hodgepodge.

When Yugoslav Communism whimpered to a halt in 1989, another multiethnic federation could still have been formed by agreement. Slobodan Milosevic had other ambitions. A Serb, he sought Serb supremacy and set about achieving it militarily. The result has been to complete with a cold brutality copied from Hitler and Stalin the ethnic reshuffling of the last corner of continental Europe to have survived from an earlier and more tolerant time.

The spectacle has been ghastly. The ghosts of Nazism and Communism seem to stalk the land. Diplomatic negotiations and every type of private and public pressure did nothing even to moderate a President Milosevic bent on the "cleansing" of all the non-Serbs who once had been his fellow citizens. In blood, the new republics of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia have been born. Probably only specialists had heard previously of the former Yugoslav province of Kosovo and its Albanians, but it was there that the West drew the line.

NATO rests its case for going to war on the moral imperative to save the Albanian Kosovars from ethnic cleansing. Its leaders speak of imposing "civilized behavior" on Milosevic and his soldiers. This is a moral crusade. Under the terms of its charter, NATO is to go to war only when one of its members is attacked. There are United Nations resolutions against Milosevic, but unless and until the lawyers can decide that these provide convincing legal cover for military action, NATO is in reality throwing its weight about.

Who exactly advised President Clinton to do what is still hidden in spin, but evidently the decision to go to war was based on the assumption that bombing, threatened or actual, would be enough to deter Milosevic. Frivolously, it seems, there was little or no preparation for what would happen in the event that Milosevic decided to raise the stakes in the manner of Saddam Hussein, daring NATO to do its worst, and meanwhile taking advantage of open war to expel the Albanian Kosovars, further burning the land so that their ultimate return must be unlikely. With malign cunning, he has contrived to make NATO his unwitting accomplice in criminal ethnic cleansing.

It is conceivable, as Gen. Wesley Clark and some strategists say, that in

Mr. Pryce-Jones is the author of, among other books, *The Strange Demise of the Soviet Empire* and *The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs.*

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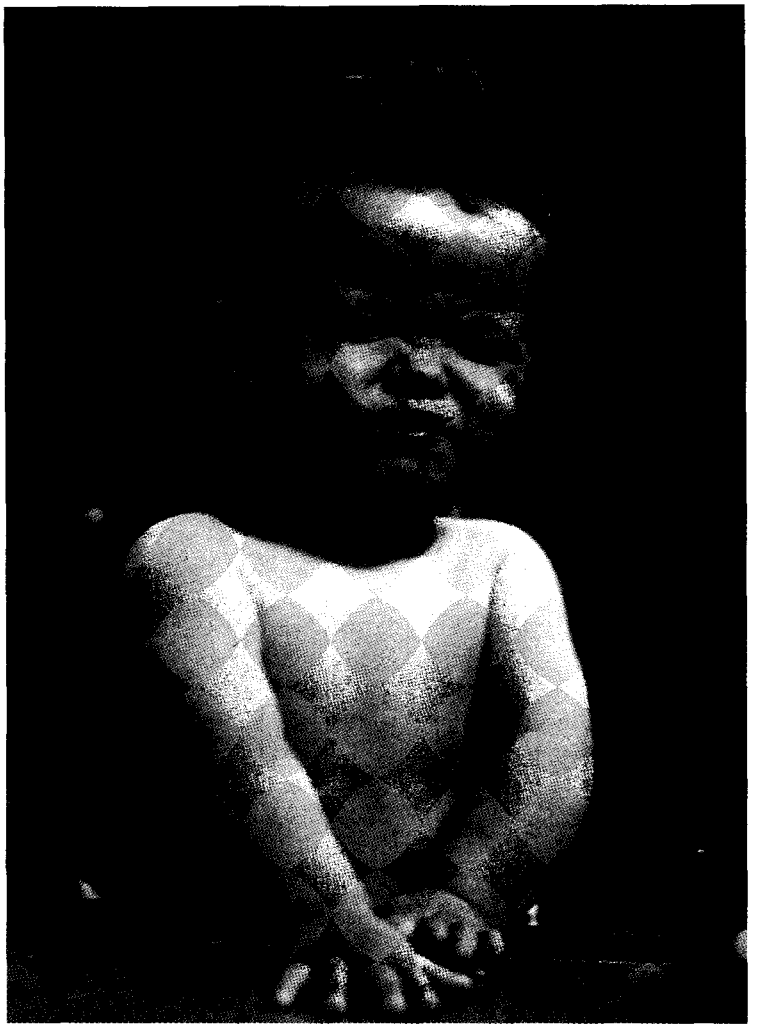

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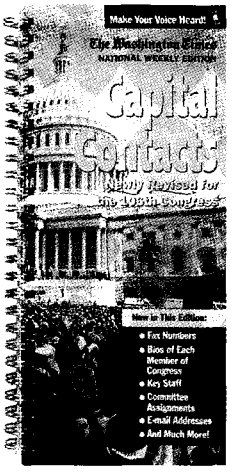

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the end bombing alone will paralyze the Serb capacity to fight. Negotiations with Milosevic may then follow, as a result of which NATO ground troops will be introduced into Kosovo, to keep the peace for as long as need be. In the absence of any such negotiations, Serb forces may still one day be so reduced that NATO meets no effective resistance. In either case, a long-term NATO protectorate of Kosovo becomes a necessity.

And what if bombing is enough to damage Milosevic and his regime, but not to break it? What if he remains defiant, and able to persuade the Serbs to go down in flames? Playing the wild cards in his hand, he might destabilize Montenegro, embroil the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, rekindle the fighting in Croatia or Bosnia, invade Albania. He may be able to summon up support from an ailing and unpredictable Boris Yeltsin.

The televised misery of the Albanians seems to be hardening public opinion in the NATO countries in favor of seeing the war through with ground forces. Among obstacles are the difficult terrain, poor or nonexistent communications, and the absence of deep-sea ports and facilities for supply. Public opinion is not likely to remain steady after several months more of desultory bombing and stalemate. NATO leaders are gradually backing into the classic trap of being damned if they do invade, and damned if they don't.

NATO has always had its critics, and they were a loose coalition of sympathizers with Socialism (as they preferred to call Communism), unilateral disarmers, pacifists, and Greens, the whole lot fusing together in dislike or resentment of America and everything it stands for. Generally speaking, these critics and their kind are in power today in Europe. Where once Clinton was avoiding military service and organizing anti-war protests in England, the youthful Tony Blair was notorious as an anti-NATO advocate of unilateral disarmament. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder typifies the Sixties mentality that America was more responsible than the Soviet Union for the Cold War and its ills, while several members of his government have a long record of anti-American agitation. In 1966, France took its distance from NATO as a calculated anti-American gesture. The restructured Communists in the French and Italian coalition governments are already opposing the NATO intervention, and threatening to resign.

NATO's credibility hangs in the balance. If at the end of the day Milosevic remains in power and in possession of a Kosovo without Albanians, then the moral justification of going to war with him will have vaporized as so much hot air. Imagine the humiliation, and the recrimination. As in the Cold War, America will be accused of leading astray a peace-loving Europe. Demonstrations of that sort are occurring in Greece and Italy and Germany. In the coming weeks or months of indecisive standoff, critics will bring sharply into question whether NATO under its charter had the right to go to war in the first place. Going further, they already argue that the war was not the moral crusade it claimed to be, but an immoral infringement of international law. No amount of ethnic cleansing alters the fact that Serbia is a sovereign state. Milosevic was "uncivilized," but so was NATO. Issues of this kind have the power to bring down governments, and lead to major political realignments.

As in the Cold War, America will be accused of leading astray a peace-loving Europe.

Matt—Rotho Syndicate

"I'm afraid you're rather typecast since the success of Titanic."

Since the collapse of Communism, many on the left have maintained that NATO is superfluous and ought to fold up its tent as the Warsaw Pact did. Embryonic alternatives to NATO already exist, Europeanist in nature rather than Atlanticist. European leaders almost without exception believe that some sort of federation of all their countries should, and will, soon emerge, and they are working to that end. If this federation is to project a presence in the world, it will require a common foreign policy and an army in support. For the time being, there are more plans and projects than actual developments, but what is called "the European defense identity" is at least a candidate to replace NATO. A Milosevic victory, whatever that means, must diminish the American role in Europe, and perhaps even lever it out.

"The West" is a concept with fuzzy edges. In the sense that they were defined as Communist, the inhabitants of former Yugoslavia, as of the Soviet Union, were positively anti-West. In the sense that they were heirs of a common European culture, Christian in living memory, they belonged to the West. Milosevic has further muddled what was already muddled. The West likes to see itself as a moral authority. Since it now proves unable to impose this authority in the core continent of Europe, how is it to continue to believe in itself and to offer a credible example of unity to the rest of the world? As expressed in the Atlantic Charter, its values are looking inapplicable, and its aims unrealistic. At war but split, why should the West be taken seriously any longer?

Character and courage are virtues in short supply. A high order of diplomatic and military skills is needed to hold NATO together and bring about a satisfactory resolution to this war. To judge by the record so far, Clinton and Blair and other NATO leaders appear to be too shallow for the tasks they have set themselves. Milosevic is certain at least to uncover what sort of moral fiber there is to these men, and whether they are capable of leadership. Napoleon had it right: We are engaged, and we shall see. **NR**

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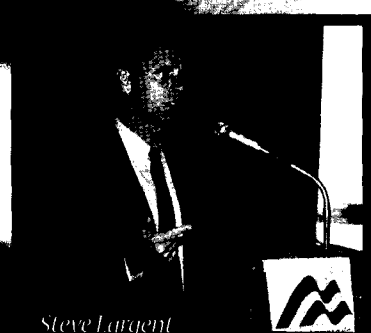
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■ THE WAR II ■

In and Out

How to win—and exit.

JOHN HILLEN

LIKE it or not, the United States is inexorably proceeding towards a ground-force intervention in Kosovo. Even if Slobodan Milosevic strikes a deal, as NATO obviously hopes, the allies will have to deploy some 50,000–60,000 ground troops for a peacekeeping mission that will make southern Lebanon look easy. And that will quite possibly be the best outcome. If the Serbian leader fights on, our policy of gradual pressure will make an all-other-options-exhausted ground war the only alternative to the West's humiliation. Either way, the U.S. and NATO will have backed into a protracted commitment they barely control.

This is an inevitable consequence of President Clinton's mix of exceedingly lofty goals (his "vision of the twenty-first century") and puny means. Vietnam demonstrated the problem with graduated escalation: The attempt to "fine tune" (in the words of McNamara aide John McNaughton) military pressure to send delicate signals leaves the initiative in the enemy's hands. Milosevic continues to determine the pace and nature of the war. Worse, each phase of graduated escalation helps the enemy prepare for the next. NATO has given Serb forces the time to acclimatize to its actions and learn to operate effectively in Kosovo during the bombing. Small wonder that 30 days into this campaign there are more Serb forces operating in Kosovo than before—and using helicopters and combat aircraft to boot. What appears to have changed since Vietnam is that the Joint Chiefs, "five silent men" in that conflict, are now five silent men leaking their protestations to the *Washington Post*.

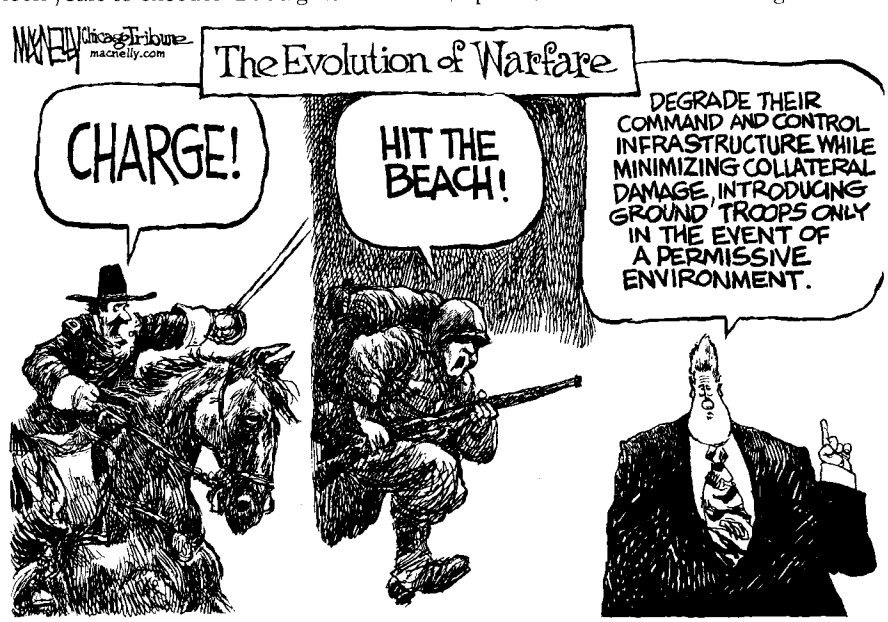
For NATO, and, more important, the United States, to regain the initiative, they will have to bring the strategic calculus into balance. Goals must be lowered, or at least defined, and the military means must be strengthened.

NATO can have only two principal goals in Kosovo—both of which require ground troops in great numbers. The first is to reverse Milosevic's aggression. The Balkans are of no great strategic importance in themselves, and embarking on an aimless military intervention there was unwise. But following through has now become a strategic imperative as well as a moral challenge. The Gulf War left a powerful impression on would-be aggressors around the globe (especially the Russians and Chinese). The way in which the Kosovo campaign is being waged, by the same token, is giving aggressors a blueprint for how to defeat the blustering, high-tech, risk-averse countries of the West. To be sure, even a powerful military campaign against Kosovo would probably not overcome the fact that many Serbs are more willing to die for Kosovo than NATO is willing to kill them—but kill we must. That is the sort of credibility understood by those who would cause us trouble over the next 25 years.

The second goal is to remove NATO from Kosovo. Even the most elegant plan for extrication from that unhappy region will likely require some ten to fifteen years to execute. But a graceful exit is an imperative. NATO has already mistakenly staked its credibility on solving Eurasia's messiest and least relevant dilemmas rather than on defending its members. Where does this stop? Moldava, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Kurdistan? Pity those NATO bureaucrats who spent two years on "the new strategic concept" for the organization only to see Kosovo define NATO's future rather than vice versa. Sen. Joseph Biden says that NATO is dead if it does not "win" in Kosovo. But it is at least as true that NATO is dead to Americans if its future consists merely of dragging the United States into conflicts it would not otherwise find good reason to address.

Both of these goals—Milosevic's defeat and our removal—require a strategy. Clausewitz, patron saint of strategists, reminds us that while war has its own grammar, its logic is that of politics. Thus far, Washington has debated only the grammar of military force. It has been surprisingly inattentive to the political logic of the war. Ground troops yes, ground troops no, ground troops here or there—but toward what political result are the troops (or any other form of military pressure) supposed to work? It is impossible for NATO to have even a semi-successful venture in Kosovo without envisioning what kind of Balkans it would like to see in 2005 and crafting a plan for getting there.

The air campaign shows the folly of throwing around military might in a political vacuum: NATO fights its war,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Mr. Hillen, an NR contributing editor, is a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

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Milosevic fights his, and never the twain shall meet. No American corporal should so much as dig a slit trench in Kosovo until his leaders understand how every military action taken by NATO forces contributes to the desired political outcome. In the absence of an endgame, a ground invasion would be a therapeutic rather than a strategic exercise. Thus far nobody in NATO, the administration, or the Republican party has really addressed how an independent or "autonomous" Kosovo could be made politically and economically viable, what to do with Milosevic, how to contain ethnic Albanian ambitions beyond Kosovo down the road, and generally how to handle the next set of tensions arising from political boundaries that do not fit ethnic energies.

The principle in Kosovo is the same as in a shop. If you break it, you buy it.

Yet the more we intervene in the region, the greater responsibility we will have for all these questions. The principle here is the same as in a shop: If you break it, you buy it. Political and economic reconstruction of a magnitude unseen since the end of World War II will have to take place in Kosovo and Serbia. Otherwise, we will be surprised when the Balkans slide back into their familiar historical rhythm, as Lebanon, Somalia, and Haiti did after allied interventions there.

Also to be settled is the division of labor among the allies. Given the paucity of America's available forces when matched against its global expectations, our prosperous and well-armed European partners should do most of the postwar reconstruction and peacekeeping in Kosovo. Already the Balkan crisis has shifted our military posture: There will be no American aircraft carrier in the Pacific until the fall. Two U.S. carriers were needed to counter Chinese pressure on Taiwan in March 1996; needless to say, the French aren't going to pick up the slack. If Saddam Hussein

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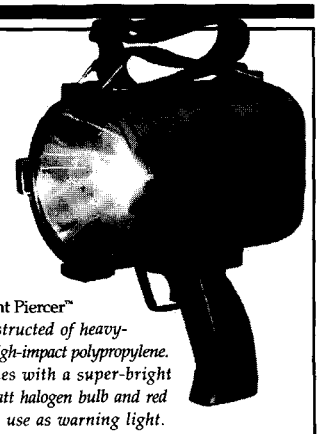

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makes a move in the Persian Gulf, it will be the National Guard's war. With the expected commitment of two to three U.S. divisions to Kosovo, there will be precisely one left for the Gulf. *Eight* were used in 1991.

NATO and the U.S. certainly have time to consider these issues. Even under the most optimistic scenarios, the ground troops needed forcibly to take back Kosovo from the Serbs would require some three months to get there. This burden could be eased if NATO lifts the self-imposed political constraints of refusing to launch invasions from Hungary, Bosnia, Macedonia and Greece, Montenegro, or even Romania. Nor should an invasion be confined to Kosovo even if Kosovo is its focus. That would repeat the mistake of Vietnam, when we left North Vietnam, Laos, and (until 1970) Cambodia off limits to ground troops—a mistake we avoided with Iraq in 1991. NATO has thus far toyed with stuffing all its troops in the muddy mess that is Albania. Initiating a ground invasion into Kosovo from there would be the equivalent of coming out of your corner swinging—but only with well-telegraphed right-hand jabs.

Our best options now are defined by two paradoxes. We must get in to get out, and we must broaden our war aims to limit them. "Getting in" with muscular force and well-defined military objectives takes back for NATO the initiative and allows the alliance to determine its own course rather than be sucked deeper and deeper into a losing fight. Taking a comprehensive approach to the Balkans will ultimately allow the U.S. a more limited and defined military role—in contrast to the current approach of throwing military force at the problem and then picking up the pieces. Bismarck brokered comprehensive agreements at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, but no great power had to commit forces to enforce them.

It is entirely appropriate for the military to be asked to make sacrifices and run risks. But sacrifice and risk-taking from NATO's political leaders have so far been conspicuous by their absence. These leaders have to do the political work of winning the war. They have to create a political framework that allows us to deal with the Balkans on our own terms rather than react to Milosevic's. Build it, and we can go. **NR**

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Cedar Rapids, Iowa

ELIZABETH DOLE must be thinking: Did *this* have to be the first question?

She's standing in a corner of the Super Skate roller rink in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, addressing a crowd of roughly 250 prim and proper Republicans at an event billed as a "town meeting." This means Dole will actually take a few questions from the audience, a risky undertaking for the tightly scripted Dole and something that she has heretofore tried to avoid.

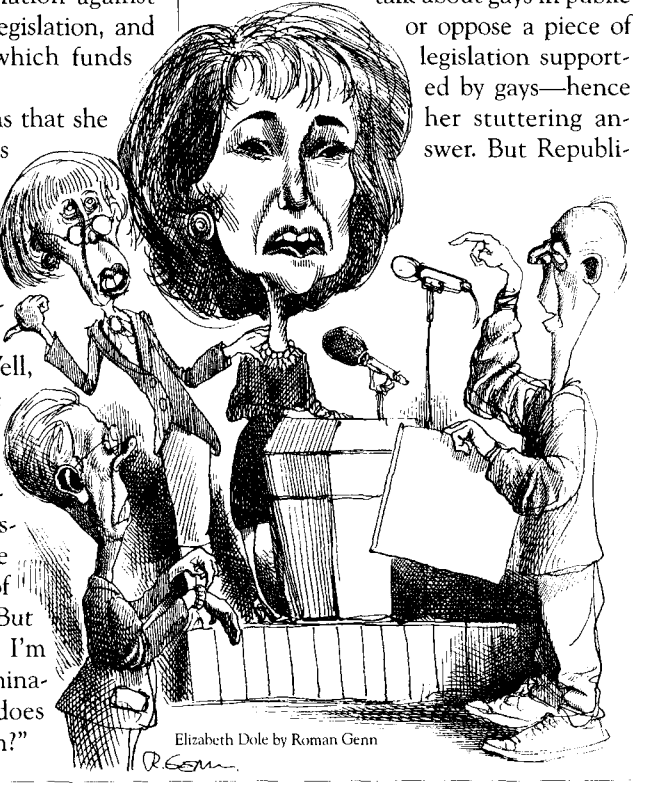
A lady with short-cropped hair, looking not so prim, stands to ask a three-part question in which she obviously has a personal stake: Does Dole support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (which forbids discrimination against gays), new hate-crimes legislation, and the Ryan White Act (which funds AIDS research)?

Dole hesitantly explains that she opposes new hate-crimes laws and supports the Ryan White bill. But then she's stumped. "Give me the first one again?" she asks the questioner. The candidate then wades back in: "Well, certainly from the title itself, in terms of employment discrimination I am very much for ensuring that there is no discrimination. I'm not sure that I know the details of that piece of legislation. But I would support . . . I'm against any sort of discrimination, of any sort. Um, does that answer your question?"

Well, the lady points out, the law would prevent discrimination against gays and lesbians. "Okay," says Dole, bracing herself for another stab at it. "We're talking about, legislation that would, ah, be supportive of, um, of, uh, privileges for, uh, gays and lesbians in terms of, uh, as I . . . I'm . . . I'm not for, uh . . . I'm against discrimination in any form for any reason. I'm *not* for special privileges though, because of one's sexual orientation."

At that, the audience breaks into applause. This moment captures the difficulty Dole will have in making the transition from carefully protected, notional presidential candidate to the real thing, caught up in the hurly-burly of campaigning. On this day, she's had to cancel two campaign stops because of inclement weather and arrived an hour late for this one. Then she gets asked about a piece of legislation that she knows nothing about, as the mike pinned to her lapel cuts on and off. As the sign above the roller rink warns, "Accidents will happen!"

Whether Dole, with her extreme aversion to risk, will be able to hack it is an open question. Waging a successful campaign will also require her to triumph over another one of her instincts: toward utterly banal positions. The last thing she wants to do, for example, is talk about gays in public or oppose a piece of legislation supported by gays—hence her stuttering answer. But Republi-



Elizabeth Dole by Roman Genn

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can caucus-goers are happy to hear tough talk on the subject—hence the applause once she manages to get to her bottom line.

Dole is a potentially powerful candidate. A buzz of anticipation fills the room prior to her arrival, and afterward dozens of people line up to shake her hand, and little girls crowd around her for pictures and autographs (which she signs with painstaking care, as if she were endorsing a large personal check). This is star power; there is no way to manufacture it, and most of the other GOP candidates would kill to get some of their own.

During her prepared remarks, Dole is almost as smooth as any of the talk-show hosts who clutter daytime television. The podium, flanked by bouquets of flowers and American flags, is left to the amateurs who introduce her. *She* strides out in front of it, warming up her audience

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Whether Dole, with her extreme aversion to risk, will be able to hack it is an open question.

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with an anecdote about an amusing letter sent to her husband Bob. Just as she finishes the story, to the crowd's laughter, she takes a step back, and an aide pops out on cue to hand her two pieces of paper. "In case you-all think I'm making this up," she exclaims, "this is the copy of the letter, you see!"

Perfect—and Dole will do it just as well, and in exactly the same fashion, at a Waterloo event the next day. The problem is that Dole is presentation and little else. It's no accident that before this Iowa swing her public appearances were confined mainly to inspirational talks at success seminars, where the emphasis is on simulated enthusiasm and sincerity, along with inspirational rhetoric the exact meaning of which is hard to divine.

Until recently, Dole had virtually no public positions (see Ramesh Ponnuru's "The Other Dole Campaign," Feb. 9, 1998). And it is not clear that she really has any now, at least not in the sense of positions she has thought through and cares deeply about. She hints as much when she explains to her roller-rink audience, "I've chosen a number of venues to announce positions," as if to say, This isn't one of them, so kindly ask no specifics. She probably would be happy to make a summation of her career the only theme of her campaign: "Coalition building is important to me, consensus building, bringing people together so we can work together and make a difference, a positive difference on the key issues that we face today."

This obviously won't do for long, so Dole does try to talk about issues. Someone must be giving her decent advice, because she talks about some good ones: taxes, missile defense, military readiness, the need to prevail in Kosovo. But she doesn't muster the ring of authority she has when describing her résumé. When she talks of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in relation to defense spending, for instance, you can imagine her practicing in the mirror beforehand to get it right: "the . . . Joint . . . Chiefs . . . the . . . Joint . . . Chiefs." And she resorts to the usual pabulum about education and drugs, except she pretends that her anti-drug position is a thing of courage: "I don't get my passion from polling."

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Dole's obvious advantage is that because of who she is—a successful woman, the former head of the Red Cross, a belle from North Carolina who exclaims "Oh my!" a lot—she by definition avoids the GOP's image problem: too hard-hearted, too extreme, and so on. In theory, that should free her to campaign to George W. Bush's right, while he works to demonstrate his compassion, to prove, in effect, that *he* would in fact head the Red Cross if he weren't stuck being governor of Texas. By temperament and inclination, however, Dole is going to be Dole.

And that will inevitably mean wasting her considerable appeal. Dressed in a sensible red suit in Cedar Rapids, her hair in a business-like do, she looks as if she stepped out of the movie *Pleasantville*, colorized and fitted with a microphone in time for the early primary states. There is nothing the least bit hip or threatening about her. In fact, she is positively corny. When she tells of a Jay Leno skit that had her pretending to be a daredevil motorcyclist, she is careful to stipulate: "Truth be told, this was the first time I've ever been on a motorcycle!"

You don't say? The routine may be saccharine, but it has its uses. Between the Clinton scandals and the Littleton massacre, there is likely to be a yearning for decency in 2000. For some candidate, there is probably great purchase in asking middle-class grown-ups, in effect, to go "Clean for Gene," supporting an effort to rekindle a bygone era of coat-and-tie civility. Dole makes feints that way herself. She refers to Bob's "many" speeches about values—well, there were at least a few—and says the main question should not be, "Are we better off than we were four years ago?," but simply, "Are we better?"

We have been here before. In 1996 Bob Dole was—at least as expressed by the transformative pen of Mark Helprin—a repository of midwestern decency: to the White House or back to Russell, Kansas. Who now can possibly believe it? Between the face lifts and the Viagra, the Doles are less representatives of middle America than of the cosmetic and pharmaceutical fakery of the age. Elizabeth Dole may be "no politician," as she often says, but she is a ferocious Washington careerist who differs from Bob only in her reluctance to appear on *Meet the Press*.

In her case, you can take the girl out of North Carolina *and* the North Carolina out of the girl. In a Waterloo, Iowa, veterans' hall, someone asks Dole why she doesn't like to be called by her childhood nickname, Liddy. Dole affects a sunny nonchalance in the course of describing how she hoped to leave that name far behind when she entered Harvard Law School. Alas, it's still with her, and so are those nagging questions.

The scene after her Waterloo appearance is likely to be emblematic of her campaign: Elizabeth Dole, surrounded by well-wishers, telling a curious potential supporter, "I'm not going to get into the details of that." **NR**

■ THE HILL ■

The Star Stays Out

What happened to Fred Thompson?

JAY NORDLINGER

EXCUSE me, but shouldn't Fred Thompson be gearing up for his presidential campaign about now? His admirers consider him a natural: charismatic, articulate, savvy, tough. His résumé is one of the most unusual and appealing in politics. But he has endorsed his fellow Tennessean, Lamar Alexander, for president.

"I kept my options open," says Thompson, but "as time went on it just didn't feel right. For me, not having an inherent personal desire to run, there would have to be a very good reason. The person and the times must come together." His service as Republican counsel to the Watergate committee, his midlife career as a movie actor, his election to the Senate—all of these things, he says, came naturally and unexpectedly. "I have never been one to plan things out. In some respects, I'm the exact opposite of my buddy Lamar. Lamar sees a goal, he plans, and more likely than not he achieves what he wants. I don't do that."

Besides which, he says, "these are kind of strange times. I think that, as a nation, we're in a caretaker stage right now. We've had peace and prosperity. There's no perceived need for any particular direction." Our era, he maintains, is one of "small ideas," as exemplified by President Clinton's push for school uniforms. A leader has to be prepared not only to follow public opinion, but to suggest a different course. And "that's not the way I want to spend my time: trying to convince people they're not as well off as they think they are."

In the Republican sweep of 1994, no politician showed more promise than Thompson. He was, in fact, the pride of the whole, eager bunch. Mere weeks after the election—before he was sworn in, even—Thompson was tabbed by then-majority leader Bob Dole to give the GOP response to an economic address by Clinton. The senator-elect's five-minute talk wowed both the party establishment and the press. "A Star Is Born," ran the *New York Times* headline the next day. The comparisons to the great Reagan himself came fast and furious. A *New Republic* article on the senator was titled "Reagan Redux." The mentioning class began to mention him as a possible vice-presidential nominee in 1996, and certainly as a contender for the top prize in 2000.

Says one Republican insider, now grown cold on Thompson, "We were so excited to have him. He was so magnetic, so talented—not geeky like the rest of us. Everyone wanted to love him, especially [majority leader] Trent Lott. We were going to have a camera guy! He could have been our champion! But Trent got his heart broken over him, as so many of us did."

What happened is that Thompson, as chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee, led the investigation into the campaign-finance abuses of 1996—this was the "Asia fundraising scandal." Republicans wanted White House blood; and Thompson, in their view, failed to draw enough. One veteran

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Republican operative says, flatly, "He made a hash of it," outfoxed and outbullied by the Democrats. Thompson's conservative critics also lament his support for campaign-finance reform and his antipathy to tort reform. On top of all that, they think he seems joyless, arrogant, and hostile to the political p's and q's that ordinarily make for success in Washington.

In short, there is a perception in GOP-land that Thompson's career is stalled, if not defunct. The mentioners do not mention him as veep next year. After the conclusion of the fundraising investigation, one column in *The Tennessean* began, "A year ago, [Thompson] looked like a rising star. Today he looks more like a fading comet." He may continue to be chairman of a powerful committee; but Reagan, mutter his detractors, has yet to be reduxed.

Thompson takes these complaints largely in stride. He is a thoughtful, plainspoken, physically imposing fellow, the only human being you will ever see rock back in a large wingback chair. He points out that he has held office for only four years, and, in Washington, "people get built up fast, and they get taken down fast." Sure, conservatives hungry for a spokesman were tickled by that response to Clinton's address back in 1994, but "the idea that they would build me up based on reading a five-minute speech into a monitor is kind of silly." And then they were "disappointed that I wasn't able to 'get Bill Clinton' in my hearings, so they consider the hearings a failure. That's just part of life."

As for the impression that he is unhappy in the Senate—one observer reports that he often scowls and seems to grind his teeth—Thompson says, smiling, "That's just my natural countenance." He then allows, "I'm agitated and frustrated a good part of the time. There's no question about it. A lot of it has to do with scheduling and the way the place operates. Maybe I haven't been here long enough to settle in and get the flow of it." He notes that "I waited until I was a little older before I came here, so it's not that being a senator is in and of itself enough to cause you to walk around with a smile on your face all the time. If I were 36 instead of 56, maybe I'd feel differently."

Was Thompson, like most of his party, disappointed in the outcome of his Asiagate probe? "Of course I was disappointed, on many levels. Mainly on the level of truth and justice." But "on the level of process and doing as well as we could with the opportunity we had, I'm satisfied"—though "you can't be completely satisfied when you know you got stiffed, in certain respects."

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Thompson is referring chiefly to the behavior of his committee's Democrats, the memory of which visibly appalls him even today, a year and a half later. Republicans faulted him for bending over backwards to accommodate the minority; that minority—the Democrats—tarred him as a partisan witch-hunter anyway. Thompson says that he had Watergate in the back of his mind—"too much so, in some respects"—and tried to follow the Watergate model, which demands a certain broadness.

Fred Thompson by Roman Genn

"A lot of my friends," he says, "thought that if we could just get something on the Democrats—and God knows there was a lot to get—we'd be in clover." But Thompson opted to tread lightly, recognizing that "today the accuser is almost as suspect as the accused. There's a good deal of skepticism about all of us in the political process"—which, he argues, happens to be "the major part of Clinton's success." Indeed, "that's why he survived." What Thompson had not sufficiently appreciated is the vitriol, coupled with a knack for sabotage, of the Democrats.

"There was nothing I could have done," he pleads, "to cause John Glenn [the senior Democrat on the committee] to try to have a fair, down-the-middle investigation." Could he hazard a guess as to why Glenn, in the waning days of a long and relatively dignified career, chose to play the part of White House protector? After a long pause, he answers, "I got some ideas, but I'd just rather not get into it. I can only say that it's one of the most disappointing things that I've ever encountered. I've been around hearings and practiced a lot of law and all, but I didn't expect that. I can't read his mind, but it was consistent, it was persistent, and there never was a moment when he deviated from what he had decided to do."

What about the suspicion that there was an exchange between Glenn and the president: obstruction for a valedictory space flight? "Well, that's between him and the good Lord," says Thompson. "I certainly don't know the answer and never will."

Thompson has concluded that traditional investigative hearings are a thing of the past. As it stands, "You have to find out all you're going to find out beforehand and use your hearings to demonstrate what you've already discovered." Why? Because "there's too much partisanship and too short an attention span among the media, especially television. We were deemed a failure literally the day after our hearings started." Most of the press considered the hearings too dull, too cautious, too fussy. Thompson held

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some off-the-record meetings with reporters, "and I said, 'Look, guys: Pay attention. I don't have John Dean and a taping system, but there's some very interesting stuff here. This was the most corrupt political campaign we've ever seen. You need to keep up with it, even if it doesn't seem blockbuster.' And they all nodded, said they understood. Bullsh**: They didn't. I should have saved my breath. The name of the game is the president: Are you going to get him or not?"

The Asia-gate investigation led by Rep. Chris Cox in the House, Thompson believes, shows that "you can still succeed." (The results of that inquiry are as yet unknown to the public.) "But they

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Thompson cheerfully acknowledges that he is off the Republican reservation on campaign-finance reform.

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didn't have hearings. They did all their work behind closed doors, in secret, which doesn't necessarily portend good things."

Not only was "ol' Fred," as the senator calls himself, unable to destroy the president over China; many conservatives are miffed that he voted to acquit Clinton on one of the impeachment counts—that concerning perjury. (He voted to convict on obstruction of justice.) Thompson explains that he found himself "encumbered" by his legal education; the perjury charge was inconsistent with "the facts, the Constitution, and my perception of what the Founding Fathers had in mind."

As for Clinton himself, Thompson has given this extraordinary figure some thought: "He's a man of his times. He's forgiven for more than people have traditionally been forgiven. Less is expected of him. We're more into personal relations and everyone's motivations than we are what they stand for." Because of nonstop and pervasive media, "the president is there with you, lives with you, on a daily basis. And we're more comfortable with a buddy than we are with a father." The remarkable thing about Clinton is "his utter lack of shame. He literally—I mean this—has no shame. He's not affected the way normal people are by humiliation. For him, it's all a part of the game. It's a matter of maneuvering to the next point. And it serves him well in the kind of environment we have now."

Confronting further conservative criticisms, Thompson cheerfully acknowledges that he is "off the [Republican] reservation" on campaign-finance reform. He contends that "it's just not right to take large sums of money from people who have legislation before you. It's that basic. The idea of mixing policy and money in that way is just so obviously a problem . . . It's kind of like an elephant in a bathtub: If you don't see it at first glance, chances are you never will." The situation "may not be fixable," he says—but ought to be.

In answer to his critics on tort reform—one of them complains that he is "in the pocket" of his fellow trial lawyers—Thompson has a single word, which he freely expands on: federalism. The question, says Thompson, should not be, "Do we think people are being sued too much this week?" It should be, "Do we believe that certain decisions ought to be made at certain levels of government?" Moreover, "we're not supposed to legislate by anecdote." For every "coffee-in-the-lap" story, Thompson and others are happy to provide a tale of a litigant unjustly squashed.

Fred Thompson's political career is not dead; but it is quieter than it was at the beginning, when balloons and confetti were everywhere, and hopes were at their highest. He is content with his committee positions and disavows any interest in a leadership post. He may indeed run for president someday, "if I feel, This is my time and place. It would have to be soon, obviously." Thompson, says one close to him, is like Reagan, not only in his naturalness before the camera, but in that he has other places to go: He didn't make his career in politics; he may well end it outside of politics.

In the meantime, says the senator, "my main ambition is to be involved in some good causes, do exactly what I think is right, and at the end of the day feel that I've made a difference"—a decent aspiration, however modest. **NR**

■ **EDUCATION** ■

The Graduates

Do too many kids go to college?

JAMES BOWMAN

HOLDEN CAULFIELD once pointed out that Pencey Prep's claim that "since 1888 we have been molding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men" was "strictly for the birds," since "I didn't know anybody there that was splendid and clear-thinking and all. Maybe two guys. If that many. And they probably *came* to Pencey that way." Then as now those who spend a lot of money for educational prestige don't really require the splendidness and clear thinking as advertised. They know that what they learn at places like Pencey will matter far less than the fact that they have been there. But what has always been true for the educational elites is now true for the prestige-seeking masses. Nowadays, even quite humble state universities are selling prestige—not the prestige of brand-name institutions but the generic prestige given by our credential-obsessed culture simply associated with having been to "college."

Now that even many unskilled, entry-level jobs require a college degree, while a high-school diploma does not even guarantee basic literacy, this qualification is a sort of passport to white-collar status—and to cold, hard cash. In 1997, for example, the average college graduate earned $40,478 while the average high-school graduate earned only $22,895. And the value of a college education is continuing to increase. Degree-holders can now expect to earn 76 percent more than those without a degree, whereas in 1975 the difference

Mr. Bowman is the American editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

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between their respective earnings prospects was only 57 percent. High-school graduates in 1975 could expect to earn 92 percent of the average wage; now that figure is only 77 percent.

Hardly surprising then that in 1996, 27 percent of the college-age population was attending college, whereas in 1975 only 20 percent was. The more people go, the more they think they have to go. But does a university degree amount to anything more than an essential line on a résumé? Does it imply any substantive attainment whatsoever? In a study of the available data on this question in the journal *Academic Questions*, Daniel Casse and Bruno V. Manno note that "the population that graduates from

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Degree holders can now expect to earn 76 percent more than those without a degree.

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two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions may be self-selecting. It may be the subset of the population that, prior to any college experience, already possesses higher literacy levels and the requisite skills to obtain more lucrative employment . . . Compared to children who do not attend college, those who subsequently graduate from college come from wealthier homes, have more highly educated parents, and demonstrate stronger math and verbal skills before they receive any postsecondary training." In other words, like the one or two splendid and clear-thinking boys at Pencey Prep, they probably came there that way. As Edwin S. Rubenstein of the Hudson Institute argues, the studies that seem to suggest a huge gap between college-educated and high-school-educated wage earners do not control for the different socioeconomic backgrounds and IQs of the two groups.

Studies that do control for these factors indicate that the value added by college itself is only about 15 percent. But the illusion of "lucrative employment" to be won by a college education leads students into ruinous debt and devalues their education still further by attracting far too many unqualified stu-

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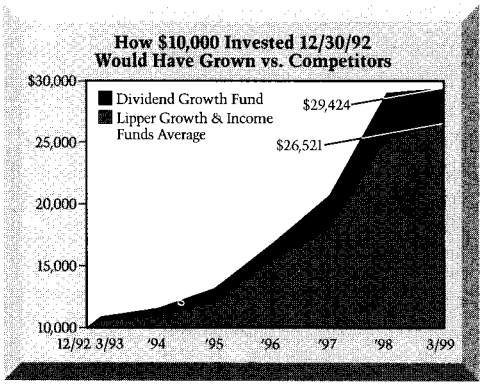

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dents into higher education, so feeding the vicious cycle by which "college" comes to seem a necessity when it manifestly is not.

Naturally the Clinton administration, which justly regards the professoriat as one of its most loyal constituencies, is encouraging this misuse of social resources with more money for higher education in the form of the president's signature "Hope" scholarships. These amount to $1,500 in tax credits for the first two years of higher education, but their real effect was indicated when Richard Riley, the secretary of education, recently wrote to university heads asking them not to take the opportunity of the new money available to raise tuitions. Of course that is exactly what they will do and are doing already. California, which enacted a tuition cut last year, is now set to raise its rates again so as to "increase the effective federal subsidy of California's higher education programs."

As the *Wall Street Journal* points out, public universities like those in California would be foolish to charge less than the $2,000 that allows them to take full advantage of the amount of free money provided by the government. (The scholarship covers 100 percent of the first $1,000 of tuition and 50 percent of the second $1,000.) Yet this gift from the Treasury to mainly Democratic and often radically left-wing academics is politically foolproof, since college-educated but dim-witted soccer moms, convinced that their children face a choice between college and the gutter, continue to believe that they have received a benefit from their president in Washington. It is hard to tell which is more impressive, the political elegance of the program or its moral cynicism.

Can people ever be disabused of the notion that they are actually getting something valuable for the vast sums they spend on higher education? So far it seems not. College admissions officers are beating the applicants off with sticks. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, at colleges across the country dormitories are full and the overflow are being packed into hotels—and this at a time when tuition costs are increasing at more than double the rate of inflation. In fact, according to Richard Vedder, professor of economics at Ohio University, "In the past decade and a half, tuition costs have increased 195.3 percent while the overall consumer price index has risen just 63.3 percent." In other words, students are paying more and getting less for their money.

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The most scandalous source of cash in which the system is awash comes from the debt students eagerly incur.

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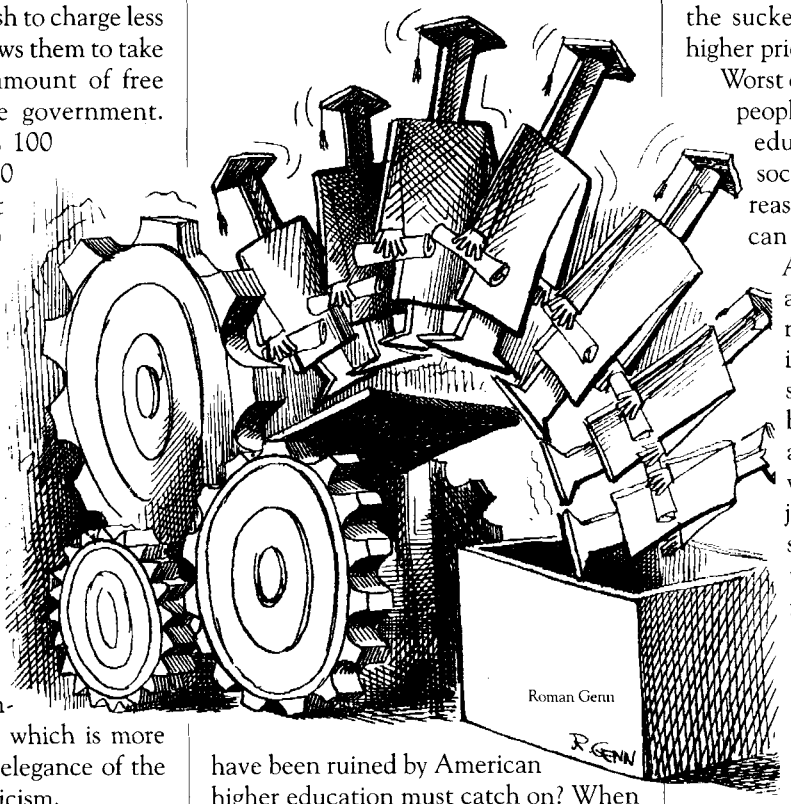
This is only what should be expected when demand is so heavy, but surely eventually even those whose brains have been ruined by American higher education must catch on? When the news came out last October that tuition costs had risen by 4 percent in the previous year, two and a half times the rate of inflation, the universities scarcely even bothered to try to justify the increase. George Rupp, president of Columbia University, told the *New York Times* that one reason was "updating dormitories and dining halls to keep up with the demands of students and their parents for standards that increasingly seek to match those of hotels and restaurants."

The most scandalous source of the cash in which the system is awash comes from the debt students are pathetically eager to incur in order to go to "college." As tuitions are increasing, most financial aid now comes in the form of loans, and increasingly unsubsidized ones. Loans are now 60 percent of financial aid where twenty years ago they were about 40 percent. This means that the universities are putting the squeeze on their cash cow—the thing that is responsible for the explosion in college costs over the last quarter-century, namely the realization in the 1970s that the qualification they were offering had become so valuable that students were willing to take out a lien on their futures to get it. The universities didn't have to hike tuition at all. They did so because the suckers keep coming, even at the higher prices.



Worst of all, perhaps, is that the more people are pitchforked into higher education for economic and social rather than for educational reasons, the more *lower* education can get away with not doing. Already, remedial education is a huge part of the college curriculum, even at many elite institutions. If you add in the stuff that is not called remedial but would have been covered already if public high schools were doing an even adequate job, you begin to realize that, in substance, what people are willing to pay so highly for is mostly only what they have already paid for (though not received) through local property taxes devoted to education.

What a racket! Conservatives should lead the way in calling attention to it, in hiring those who have the courage and good sense to stay out of college, and in fighting every attempt, public or private, to put more money in the hands of the education establishment. **NR**

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■ LITTLETON ■

The Killer Narcissists

The missing explanation.

BARBARA LERNER

THE questions won't go away. The recent shooting spree—the eighth in two years—forces us to face them again. Why all these wanton killings by schoolboys, this senseless spiral of schoolhouse slaughter? Who are these kids? Why are they doing it? What can we do? In the '90s, most parents look to psychology for answers, but psychology doesn't have one set—it has two: pre-'60s answers and post-'60s answers. And they conflict.

Every sensate American knows the post-'60s answers. You hear them from all the talking heads. Not just establishment experts, but mainstream teachers, preachers, politicians, and journalists. All subscribe to the conventional wisdom of the '90s: Kids who kill are in great distress, they've been neglected, rejected, and abused, their self-esteem is low, they are crying out for help. They need more love and understanding, more communication and parental attention, more early intervention, professional counseling, and anger-management training. And the reason we have more of these kids today is that we have more absent parents, more media violence, more guns.

Will the Colorado killers fit this profile? Were they the abused offspring of harsh, uncaring parents and a cold, indifferent community, desperately unhappy beings with nowhere to turn for help? It doesn't look like it. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold both came from intact middle-class families variously described by neighbors as "solid," "sensitive," and "utterly normal," and both had already been through the therapeutic mill. Each boy had gotten individual counseling; each got anger-management training as well. Both finished their therapy in February, two months before the crime, and both got glowing reports from their counselors.

Maybe, when all the facts are known, Harris and Klebold will turn out to be a lot more like Kip Kinkel, the 15-year-old Oregon shooter who vanished from the news as soon as his life story began to emerge because it didn't fit the profile at all. Kinkel was a problem for the conventional wisdom because he had it all, everything '90s experts recommend. His parents were popular teachers, one of them was always there for him when he came home from school, and both did their best to make him happy, spending time with him, taking him on family vacations, helping him get whatever he wanted, even when the things he wanted unnerved them. They made few demands, rejected firm discipline as too harsh, and sought professional help, early and often. They were in counseling, along with Kip, when, in May 1998, he shot them both dead, killed two of his many school friends, and wounded 22 others.

Looking at cases like this, psychologists in the 1950s and earlier had a set of answers you don't hear much anymore. Here's an updated sample: We have more wanton schoolboy killers today because we have more narcissists, and the step from being a narcissist to being a wanton killer is a short one, especially in adolescence. A narcissist is a person who never progressed beyond the self-love of infancy, one who learned superficial social skills—narcissists are often charming—but never learned to love another and, through love, to view others as separate persons with an equal value. To the narcissist, other people have no intrinsic worth; their value is purely instrumental. They are useful when they satisfy his desires and enhance his self-esteem, disposable as bottle caps when they don't.

Only the narcissist matters, and because his sense of self-importance is so grossly inflated, his feelings are easily hurt. When they do get hurt—when others thwart him or fail to give him the excessive, unearned respect he demands—he reacts with rage and seeks revenge, the more dramatic the better. Take guns away from kids like these, and many won't settle for knives and baseball bats: They'll turn to deadlier weapons—to explosives, as that overgrown schoolboy, Ted Kaczynski did, or to environmental poisons, as the young subway saboteurs of Japan did. Kip was on his way—police found five bombs at his house. And the Colorado killers upped the ante: They made more than 30 bombs and used shrapnel as well as bullets to blow away their victims.

Will more counseling and anger-management classes help? At best, they are palliatives, in cases like these. They can put a patch over the hole at the core of these kids, the moral void, but they cannot fill the hole. No brand of psychology can, and earlier brands—Freud's especially—had the humility to recognize that. He saw the hole for what it is, a moral hole that only moral training can fill. Not just calm, rational, smiley-face, didactic lessons, but the kind intense, gut-level experiences children have when their parents draw a sharp moral line and demonstrate a willingness to go all out to defend it.

Through experiences like these, moral children learn that the parental love they could take for granted as infants and toddlers can no longer be taken for granted. That love is no longer unconditional; it can be withdrawn. To avoid that frightening outcome, the child learns to see his parents more than human piñatas, full of candy, that has only to bang away at to get it. He learns to see them as moral beings with standards and values that are more important than his own immature wishes, and he begins to internalize those standards and values, making them his own, and developing a conscience.

Many '90s experts don't understand this process. They focus only on the child's self-esteem, not on esteem for others. And they obsess about the methods parents use to teach their kids, ignoring the real content, the moral lessons they are trying to teach, insisting that any physical punishment, however infrequently and judiciously applied, is child abuse. These experts have no real solutions to offer, when the problem is overindulgence rather than abuse, as it now so often is. They are part of the problem. And the sooner we recognize that, the better. NR

Dr. Lerner is a psychologist and writer in Chicago.

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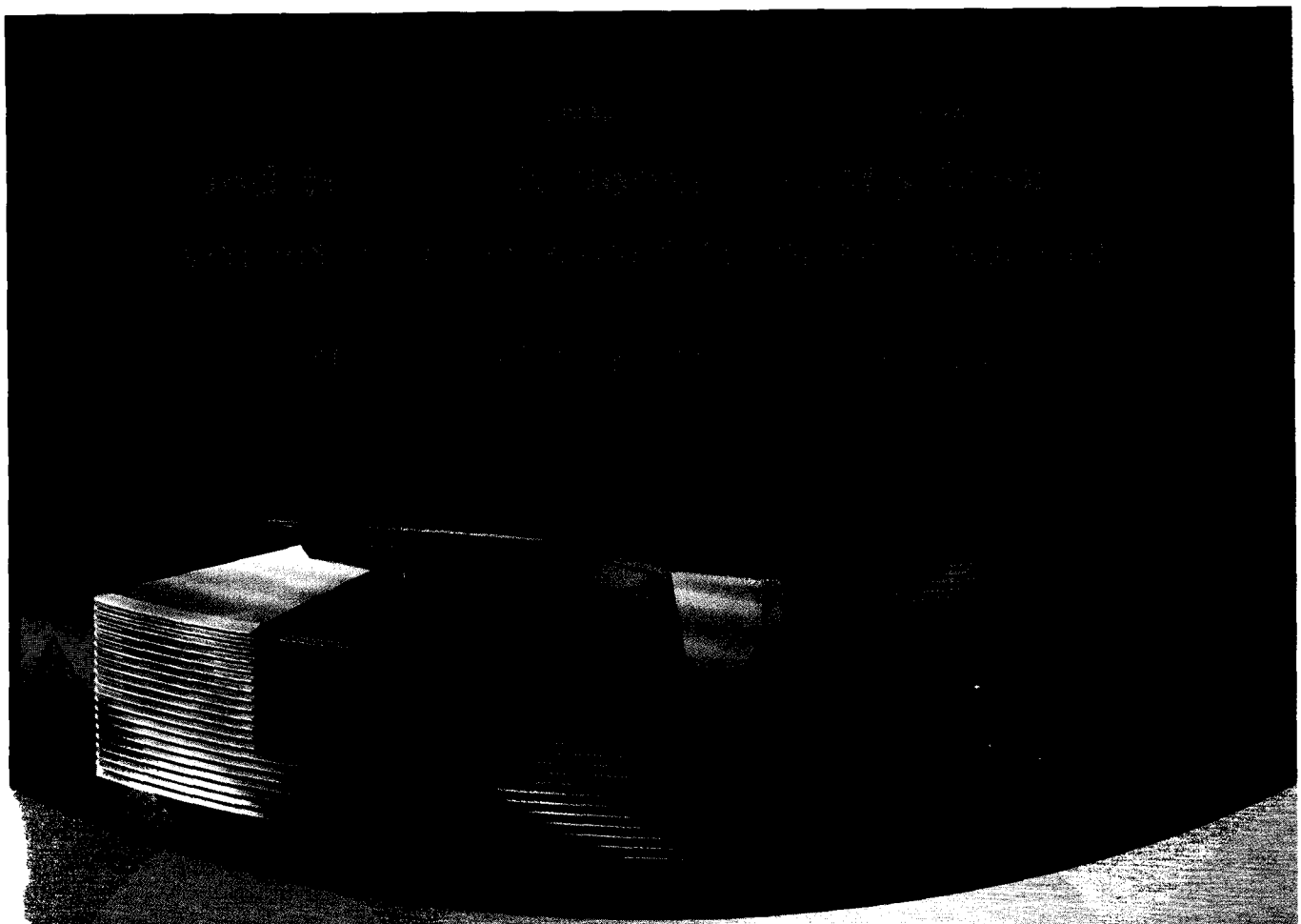

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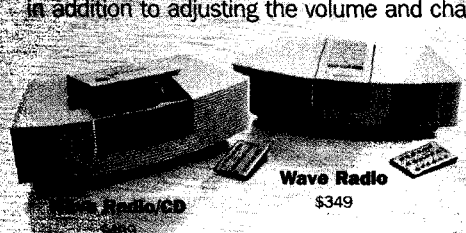

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■ CULTURE WATCH ■

The South Falls Again

Cigarette billboards, R.I.P.

DAVE SHIFLETT

THE dismantling of the nation's remaining tobacco billboards, completed last month, has been characterized as the passing of another form of Americana, and of course as a sign of national progress. Gone are the days when motorists, pedestrians, and even wearisome bicyclists could enjoy heroic portrayals of the Marlboro Man and Joe Camel, on whose solitary hump countless youngsters were allegedly carried into the grips of nicotine addiction. Gone, but not entirely forgotten. In their places will be posted stern anti-smoking slogans, proving once more that Aunt Polly has replaced Uncle Sam as the true embodiment of the American Way.

Which of course is the real story here. Most of the commemorative pieces about the end of the 'bacca-boards have concentrated on the artistic loss; yet there is much more afoot than that. As those of us with deep southern roots recognize, this crusade constitutes not only a full-blown act of cultural aggression—yet another blow to the heart of the South's once-distinct culture—but a philosophical coup d'état that should disturb every rational person left in America.

Let us first consider the cultural-aggression issue. As every southern ethnic knows, tobacco is more southern even than grits. You can grow potatoes in Virginia, but you can't grow tobacco, or at least good tobacco, in Idaho or Maine. Not surprisingly, we have taken great pride in our Noble Weed. I recall as a child gazing up at the great smoke-ring-blowing billboard in New York and thinking: These people up here need us, and they know it.

But the regional identification goes much deeper than that. Tobacco smoking is the perfect embodiment of our philosophy of life—one in which pleasure walks hand in hand with death. Smoking is not our only contribution to this philosophical school, to be sure. There is also moonshine drinking, NASCAR racing, snake handling, and large family dinners, which often include a round of mutual pistol whipping prior to the serving of dessert. But tobacco smoking best reflects our delight in dancing with death because this particular dance can take many decades to complete, and as most people know we fully appreciate the virtues of taking one's time.

During the long waltz, partakers (as opposed to "addicts," a fiercely judgmental designation) can contemplate smoking's simple and profound core teaching: Life is transitory, and we are foolish to fear the Grim Reaper. To the contrary, the best way to proceed through life is by routinely rubbing shoulders with the Old Boy. This is why we could never think of the Marlboro Man as a mere marketplace peddler. Both he and the cheerful Camel are indeed prophets.

As befitting prophets, these two are now quite unwelcome in their own land. Their sensible and practical philosophy is under constant bombardment from men and women preaching a foolish creed, one clearly based on a deep and unconquerable fear of death. We know their beliefs all too well: Those who eat light, exercise right, and avoid tobacco, alcohol, and firearms, can live indefinitely. There is no questioning the chronic nature of this societal disease. Not long ago, when a person so disposed warned that cigarettes could kill you, we responded that if they didn't, something else would, which typically elicited a grudging assent. Now, that indisputable point is considered something close to a lie.

We southerners (I speak of true southerners, not scalawag trial lawyers and government officials) assume that the popularity of this fearful alien philosophy reflects a decline in traditional religious faith, which cautions against fretting over one's assured demise. We find no joy in pointing this out, for our adversaries are much to be pitied. Philosophically speaking, they have booked themselves on a train heading for a cliff, beyond which lies a yawning abyss. That is bad enough. But to make matters worse, they have determined to make this hopeless journey in a train where there is no smoking, no drinking, no scrapple, and no eggs. As self-flagellation goes, this is pretty hard to beat.

By contrast, when the southerner arrives at his eternal destination, wherever that may be, his first questions will concern whether the kegs have been tapped and if his old hunting dog is hereabouts. Until then, however, we do worry that our children will take on the alien philosophy, which will spoil their mental well-being, and ours as well. For one thing, we do not want them to suffer the night sweats every time they eat an éclair, sip a julep, bathe in the sun, or fire up a stogie.

We are saved only by our hope in Divine Providence, and by our ability to see the good in the bad. The new crackdown may indicate a growing consensus that youth really are influenced ! media messages. To be sure, billboa had nothing to do with inspiring ma older southerners to smoke, as we to up the habit before we learned to re But it has been an article of enligh ment that a child can, for exampl home reading bomb-making m and listening to Marilyn Mansc out picking up anti-soci Admitting otherwise—and t censorship that took dow boards is clearly such an ad in the service of truth.

Nor are we southerners ir recognizing that the setback somewhat balanced by more s cultural developments. Yes, in t of our youth we could never hav seen the war on smokes. At the time, we would have been similarly pable of imagining the day when a dent could go to the school nurse get a pack of rubbers ("condom" wa then in usage). In fact, as miracle the latter may be the greater of the t

We are left with the prospect t some of our children will enjoy all tha easy sex members of our generation were supposed to have experienced, but which seems to have eluded most of us. We can only hope that at the completion of relations, our dear ones do not suggest lighting up and have the hell smacked out of them. NR

Mr. Shiflett is a writer in Virginia.

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■ COVER STORY ■

Not Dead Yet

The pro-life movement is winning.

RAMESH PONNURU

NOBODY told the losers outside the clinics, but the abortion wars are over. The Republican party is in danger of becoming "operationally pro-choice," laments pro-life journalist Fred Barnes. Jim Pinkerton, a pro-choice Republican who writes often on the baleful influence of social conservatives on his party, is positively gleeful that the GOP has finally taken his advice and become "functionally pro-choice."

Both point to the presidential primary race as evidence. George W. Bush has declared that a sweeping ban on abortions is unattainable. Elizabeth Dole says that even talking about a ban would merely extend a "dead-end debate." John McCain wants to revise the party platform to make it clear "to young women in this country who may have a disagreement with us on the issue of abortion" that "there's room for all of us in our party." John Kasich suggests that pro-life Republicans "lower the volume" on the debate over abortion. The "underlying message," according to Christopher Caldwell, is that these are pro-lifers "you can vote for without fear that your abortion rights will be curtailed." Says the columnist Charles Krauthammer, "The great abortion debate is over."

Actually, Krauthammer wrote that back in 1992. Since then, pro-lifers have added about three dozen congressmen, a dozen senators, and four governors to their ranks; they have twice passed in Congress a bill banning some abortions and come close to overriding the president's vetoes of it; they have moved the debate over abortion to ground more favorable to them; and they have converted the Jane Roe of *Roe* v. *Wade* to their cause. So are the latest obituaries for the pro-life movement any more accurate?

Krauthammer read too much into the failure of Missouri attorney general William Webster—who had argued a high-profile abortion case before the Supreme Court—to win the 1992 gubernatorial race. In fact, Webster's defeat had less to do with abortion (an issue he ran away from) than with scandal: He would be sentenced to jail within a year of the election. But Krauthammer's deeper mistake is a common assumption: that a pro-life stance must be, except in a few places, a political liability.

Almost the entire national press corps believes this. So do most Republican officials and consultants, not to mention their Democratic counterparts. As a result, many sincerely pro-life Republicans are defensive about abortion. Even Pat Buchanan has occasionally conceded the point, arguing that protecting the unborn is worth losing some votes. That abortion is a losing issue is the premise of most of the talk about whether the primaries pull the GOP's presidential nominee too far to the right to win a general election. Abortion is also frequently cited as a major cause of the "gender gap"—the tendency of women to vote more than men for Democrats.

Ralph Reed, the political consultant formerly affiliated with the Christian Coalition, points out the flaw in the dominant view that being pro-life loses votes: "There's not a scintilla of evidence to support that position." He's not exaggerating. Yes, Americans oppose a constitutional amendment and support *Roe*, in some polls by substantial majorities. And yes, more Americans regard themselves as "pro-choice" than "pro-life"—though that margin has been shrinking and is now statistically insignificant in some polls. But the picture changes when people are asked to describe their views in greater detail.

POLL POSITIONS

A poll released earlier this year by the Center for Gender Equity, a feminist group, found that 53 percent of American women favor prohibiting abortion either altogether or with exceptions for rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother. A lot of people were shocked by this finding. They shouldn't have been. It's consistent with polls pro-life groups have been

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doing for years; a Christian Coalition poll taken the same week had an identical result.

Men, contrary to conventional wisdom, have been found again and again to be somewhat more likely than women to support legal abortion (though marital status and church attendance are both better predictors than gender of attitudes toward abortion). Including men, about half the population would ban abortion with an exception for rape, incest, fetal deformity, or to save the life of the mother—which would mean a ban on 95 percent of abortions.

Another quarter of the population would ban abortions after the first trimester. Only about 10 percent agree with abortion-rights groups that abortions should be allowed at any stage of pregnancy. And while there has been some movement in these numbers over the last few years—support for abortion on demand has actually been getting slightly smaller—a restrictionist majority has existed throughout the entire period since *Roe*. For ten years, CBS/*New York Times* polls have found that about 55 percent of the population wants abortion either "illegal" or "under stricter limits than it is now" rather than "generally available." There's a reason abortion-rights groups fight so hard to keep the issue in the courts: They'd lose a lot of ground in a democratic debate.

New Jersey governor Christine Whitman, an ardent proponent of abortion rights, has never won the women's vote.

So why the support for *Roe*? Why have more Americans called themselves "pro-choice" than "pro-life" for most of this period? Public ignorance may play a role. Americans probably overestimate the percentage of abortions that result from pregnancies begun in rape or incest. Even highly educated people misunderstand *Roe*, believing that it allows increasingly severe restrictions as pregnancies progress. In fact, *Roe* and its companion case, *Doe* v. *Bolton*, make it impossible to restrict abortion at *any* stage of pregnancy if a woman's emotional "well-being" or family life could be said to be threatened. Without an appreciation of *Roe*'s radicalism, an amendment to overturn it is what looks radical.

In addition, a lot of people who hold pro-life views are probably too uncomfortable with and distrustful of the pro-life movement's perceived militancy to call themselves pro-life. Almost nobody wants to be on the side of snipers and bombers, or even associated with them. In *First Things* last November, David Andrusko cited two measures of the political impact of violence against abortionists and abortion clinics: "Around the time of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Roe*, the Associated Press sent out a twelve-item summary of major abortion events that have taken place since 1973. *Half* of these concerned instances of violence. In [a 1998 CBS/*New York Times* poll], 44 percent of the respondents said they considered 'anti-abortion activists' in their states 'extremists.' By contrast, 66 percent considered 'abortion rights advocates' in their states 'reasonable.' "

COUNTING THE VOTES THAT COUNT

The opinion of the public, in any case, is not as electorally important as the opinion of that subset of the public willing to vote on the issue. And here the pro-life advantage is unequivocal: Far more pro-lifers than pro-choicers vote on abortion. An exit poll by Richard Wirthlin found that in 1996, voters for whom abortion was one of the top two issues went 45 percent for Bob Dole and 35 percent for Bill Clinton.

A *Los Angeles Times* poll gave Dole an even bigger margin among women who voted on abortion. George Bush, too, benefited from votes cast on the abortion issue in both 1988 and 1992 (according to Voter Research and Surveys). In 1994, the pro-life advantage was 2 to 1. When pollsters ask voters how they would react if the GOP dropped the abortion issue, more say they would be less likely to support the party than say they would be more likely. The political intensity is on the pro-life side.

This is true almost everywhere. According to a CNN poll, Illinois pro-lifer Peter Fitzgerald won 55–41 among single-issue abortion voters in his Senate race last fall. In liberal New York, the margin for Sen. Al D'Amato—who was terrified of the abortion issue but nominally pro-life—was slightly bigger (58–42). Even in California, Republican gubernatorial candidate Dan Lungren, who lost big, had a tiny edge among voters who cast their votes on abortion.

A pro-choice partisan might respond that the hard evidence doesn't take account of the image of the anti-abortion candidate: Voters who may not think about abortion specifically may consider the candidate intolerant or insensitive or extreme. There is some truth to this, especially given the media's treatment of pro-lifers. But it is also true that being pro-life is associated with conservatism, a positive image in most places. The crucial blow to Republicans' image resulted from their campaign to curb the growth of Medicare in 1995, which wasn't a social issue or even a particularly conservative one. Finally, an image problem can at least theoretically be solved without a shift in position—for instance, through a modulation of rhetoric.

The gender gap, meanwhile, afflicts pro-choice Republicans as well as pro-life ones. New Jersey governor Christine Whitman, an ardent proponent of abortion rights whom the national media still seem to regard as the hope for the future of the party, has never won the women's vote. Pro-choicer William Weld had a 21-point gender gap when he ran for the Senate from Massachusetts in 1996. And since women tend to be more liberal than men on guns, defense, and the safety net, there are issues other than abortion that can explain the gap. "The gender gap has many complex causes," says poll analyst Karlyn Bowman. "Abortion is not one of them."

If being pro-life is a major liability, you couldn't tell it from the record of pro-life candidates in the '90s. In 1994, pro-lifers gained 48 House seats and not a single pro-life incumbent of either party was defeated by a pro-choicer. In 1996, pro-lifers picked up seats in the Senate and lost fewer seats in the House than the Republicans did; several pro-choice

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Republicans lost high-profile races. The 1998 election went badly for pro-lifers. But the election went badly for pro-choice Republicans too, and the pro-life defeats were pretty clearly a result of issues other than abortion. In Alabama and South Carolina, for instance, voters favored Democratic candidates for governor who promised to create state lotteries to raise money for schools. (A neat trick: exploiting public ignorance to promote public education.)

And pro-lifers had a better election than the Republicans they supposedly hurt. Republicans ended the elections with fewer governors than before, pro-lifers with more. Republicans lost five seats in the House, pro-lifers three—partly because Democrats were actively recruiting pro-life candidates to run in pro-life districts.

HEAR NO EVIL

Given all this evidence, the persistence of the notion that the pro-life cause is crippling the GOP is a little puzzling. The media contribute to it. Covering abortion neutrally would be difficult in the best of circumstances—should an anti-abortion law be described as "restrictive" or "protective"?—but journalists are almost unanimously for abortion rights. The Republican party's big donors, with whom GOP officials spend a lot of time, are mostly pro-choice. Jeff Bell, a social-conservative activist who is now managing Gary Bauer's presidential campaign, complains that even as Republicans become more unanimously pro-life—nobody in the presidential field openly avows abortion rights—they are talking about the issue less and less.

But there is a real reason for Republican caution. The central fact about the public's thinking on abortion is that most people don't like to think about it. In the Wirthlin poll of the 1996 election, abortion was one of the top two issues for only 12 percent of voters. The aversion to the issue explains some of the weird dissonances in the polling. Not thinking about the issue is the way a majority of the public can say that abortion is "murder" but not feel obliged to do anything about it. Similarly, the widespread ignorance of basic facts about abortion after more than a quarter-century of strife is a testament not only to the dishonesty of academic, legal, and journalistic elites but also to the public's refusal to know.

Voters don't want to hear about abortion. It's that discomfort that forces abortion-rights groups to run ad campaigns that praise "choice" without mentioning what choice they're talking about. In the two most prominent endorsements of legal abortion in the 1996 campaign—Colin Powell's at the Republican convention and Al Gore's at the Democratic one—the word "abortion" was not uttered. Abortion has become the right that dare not speak its name.

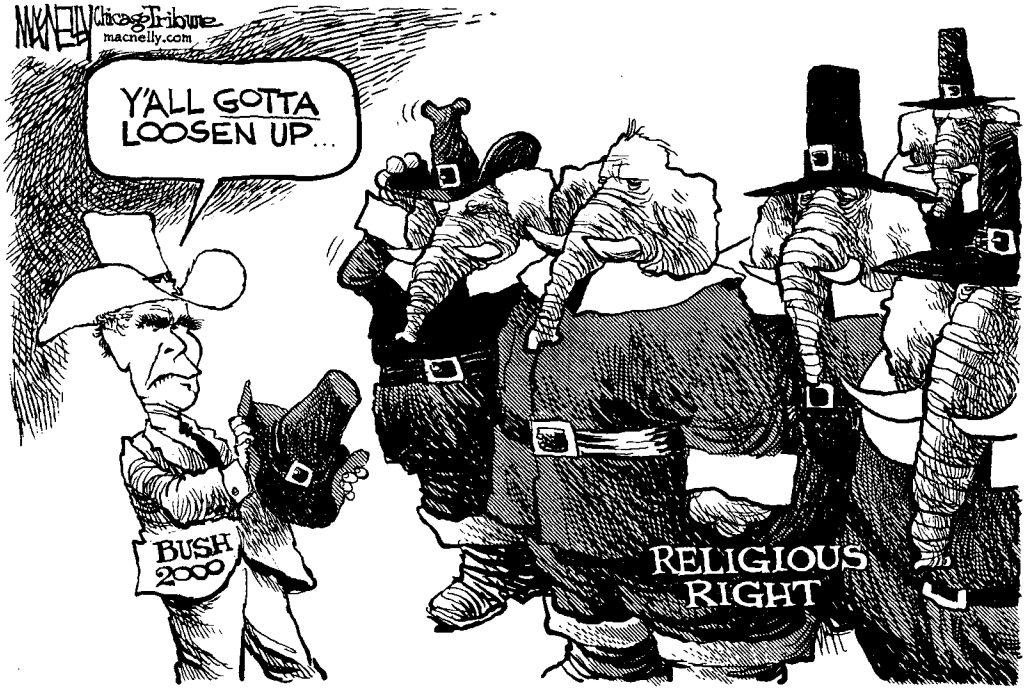
If the public resents being forced to think about abortion, this attitude must in general benefit the status quo: legal abortion without government funding. A political crusade against abortion faces an uphill battle against both this silent resentment and the screaming opposition of the abortion movement. This brings us to Jeff Bell's paradox: that pro-lifers get more votes but less talk from Republicans.

What Bell is describing is actually the normal trajectory of a wedge issue in a two-party system. Declamations against abortion—and, to a lesser extent, homosexuality—attracted millions of evangelical and Catholic voters to the GOP in the '70s and '80s. Says Ralph Reed: "We would certainly be a minority party if we were not a pro-life party. There's no doubt about that." But eventually new constituencies get absorbed into a party, and opponents get organized. The religious-conservative movement may have reached this point with the emergence of a powerful coalition of vice including the clinics, the gambling industry, the pornographers, and Hollywood. The cause may continue to advance, but (as Kasich would have it) the volume of the debate goes down. The same process took place as the Democrats absorbed black voters.

Now that pro-lifers have been absorbed into the Republican party, it usually makes sense for a pro-life candidate to narrowcast his message to them through direct mail and the like. Most of the pro-lifers who vote on the issue know or will take the time to learn the candidates' positions anyway, and the candidate doesn't get too identified with the issue by everyone else.

THE CASE FOR CONFIDENCE

Mark Neumann took a different tack in his 1998 campaign to oust Wisconsin Democrat Russ Feingold from the Senate, running a barrage of TV ads on partial-birth abortion. Pro-lifers



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argue that he wouldn't have come as close as he did to winning without the ads, pro-choicers that they cost him the election. They both have a point. Neumann mobilized pro-lifers: He cleaned up, 82–17 percent, among the 20 percent of voters who cited abortion as the reason for their vote. That showing helped pro-life House candidates Paul Ryan and Mark Green win their races. But it didn't push Neumann over the top because his ad buy passed the point of diminishing returns. He should have started talking about something else.

Most Republicans don't make Neumann's mistake. Instead, misled by their consultants' advice and uncomfortable talking about abortion, perhaps even personally pro-choice themselves, they twist and turn to avoid the issue. They say that some of their best friends are pro-choice, or that there are a lot of other issues, or that they can't do much anyway. None of this, of course, makes the issue go away; indeed it invites further questions. And it does hurt candidates, by calling their characters into question. A candidate doesn't need to lead with abortion, but he should be able to stand his ground when challenged.

It's not clear yet whether the Republican presidential candidates will do that. But it's also unclear whether, as most pundits are saying, Gov. Bush and the others are backing off abortion because they think the country is pro-choice. It's possible that Bush, at least, is trying to signal the public, not that he is just kidding about being pro-life, but that he is not fanatical about it—and not intent on an overnight revolution. Most pro-lifers, reasonably, are holding their fire in the hope that Bush is serious about working toward the goal of eventually giving full legal protection to the unborn and appointing Justices who will overturn *Roe*.

If the Republican platform changes, meanwhile, it will not be because of pressure from pro-choicers and nervous party officials. That pressure makes change *less* likely, since pro-lifers will not accept a symbolic defeat. No, if the platform changes it will be because pro-lifers have concluded that a change will make it easier to advance the cause. Pro-lifers have for years been coming to the conclusion that they should shift their short-term focus away from a Human Life Amendment. They haven't forced a vote on it since 1983. And they started making partial-birth abortion an issue long before any of the current presidential candidates came knocking. The beauty of that issue has been to take the debate down from grand abstractions about "choice" to the concrete reality of what is being chosen—to shift public attention from the extremism of pro-lifers to the unjustifiable extremism of pro-choicers.

The new strategy has shifted public opinion. Gallup had 48 percent of people calling themselves pro-life in 1998, up from 33 percent three years before. Still, there are pro-lifers who accept the myth that their position is politically suicidal. So they hunker down, afraid that any attempt at tactical flexibility will make them lose their tenuous grip on the Republican party and determined to win through sheer willpower. Instead of exerting quiet, behind-the-scenes pressure, they force candidates to pledge not to consider a pro-choice running mate—and thus to look intolerant to the public. They should be more confident.

The abortion wars aren't over yet. **NR**

Baby Steps

Making abortion rare. Really.

JOHN J. MILLER

Lansing, Michigan

PRO-LIFE activist Helen Alvare has traveled to all 50 states as a speaker and fundraiser. She finds that she often has to try to energize pro-lifers discouraged at the plight of their cause—except in Michigan. "I remember going there once and seeing 'Respect Life' on the marquee of a major hotel chain. I called home and told my husband, 'I'm on another planet.' Michigan has done it so right for so long—they're famous for being good."

Measuring success isn't hard for pro-lifers: They look at a state's abortion rate. And by this standard, Michigan is a national model. After holding steady throughout most of the 1980s, the abortion rate there has taken a nosedive, falling by more than 40 percent since 1987, compared with a national decline of roughly 12 percent. "Over 100,000 lives have been saved," boasts a report by Right to Life of Michigan.

For all the high-volume arguing among Republicans over abortion politics—how the Republican National Committee should fund candidates, what the GOP platform ought to say, whether a pro-choice vice-presidential nominee is acceptable—the neglected success story in Michigan shows that abortion politics needn't be a matter of haggling over symbols or an inevitably losing proposition. President Clinton has long said he would like abortion to be "rare." In Michigan, what for Clinton is only a rhetorical flourish is a matter of some seriousness.

The pro-life movement enjoys several natural advantages in Michigan, from the large Catholic population around Detroit to strong Protestant churches in the western half of the state. "An overall pro-life ethic pervades Michigan politics," says Republican governor John Engler. Many of the state's voters are Reagan Democrats—union members who blend economic liberalism with cultural conservatism. Of the ten Democrats in Michigan's congressional delegation, three are strongly pro-life (James Barcia, Dale Kildee, and Bart Stupack). A fourth, David Bonior, was too, until he joined his party's House leadership and moved left. Frank Kelley, another pro-life Democrat, was attorney general for 37 years until his retirement last year. In fact, Michigan is one of just a few states with a statute outlawing abortion (after 24 weeks) still on the books.

For many years, however, pro-lifers struggled in Michigan. Until Engler's election in 1990, a pair of pro-choice governors, Republican William Milliken and Democrat James Blanchard, reigned in the post-*Roe* period. Pro-lifers had a majority in the statehouse, but their bills were routinely vetoed. Then, in 1988, they performed an end run around

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Blanchard by winning a ballot question to bar Medicaid funding of abortions. "That vote energized the grassroots for Engler's election two years later," says state GOP executive director Greg Brock.

The Medicaid cutoff had an enormous impact. Michigan's abortion rate dropped by nearly 25 percent within a year. Data from other states show that bans on funding typically lead to a 20–40 percent decline in abortions among Medicaid-eligible women. Not only are there more live births among these women, but also fewer pregnancies—suggesting that the law affects behavior in addition to the decision whether to abort.

Parental-consent laws have a similar effect. The abortion rate among minors has fallen by 42 percent in Michigan since the state enacted a parental-consent law in 1990. Sometime in May, U.S. district judge Nancy G. Edmunds is expected to rule on whether to allow Michigan's informed-consent law, which includes a 24-hour waiting period, to go into effect. If it does, the rate will probably decline further. The state has also started to teach abstinence in the public schools. "We eliminated the mixed message kids were getting," says Engler, who takes credit for a 26 percent drop in teen pregnancies since 1991.

The force behind many of these changes has been Right to Life of Michigan, a Grand Rapids-based organization with an annual budget of about $4 million. In a 1995 survey of legislators and lobbyists in Lansing, the group was rated the state's second-most-influential organization, behind the Chamber of Commerce. "Some people would argue that they're even more powerful than the Chamber," says Betsy DeVos, the Republican state party chairman. The same survey, in fact, named Right to Life the state's best get-out-the-vote organization. "Right to Life has become what the labor unions used to be. It can deliver votes, and lots of them," said Bill Ballenger, the publisher of Michigan's most important political newsletter, last October.

Yet the group's national reputation has more to do with an ongoing media campaign than with politics. "They own the rights to the best pro-life literature out there," says Mary Spaulding Balch of National Right to Life. At a nominal cost, Right to Life of Michigan sells posters, billboards, bumper stickers, books, and other items to an international client list of 15,000. It also has a strong presence on television, regularly placing ads meant to improve the image of pro-lifers, rebut assisted-suicide advocates, and condemn abortion-clinic violence. The production values of the ads are outstanding—they are slick, Madison Avenue-quality work, not the blurry, muffled cable-access ads typical of special-interest groups.

The most important Right to Life television campaign targets women considering an abortion. The ads don't deliver a preachy message or include photos of fetal development. They focus on the woman, not the unborn child, and subtly suggest that motherhood is an empowering choice. These ads are generally run during afternoon talk shows, *Beverly Hills 90210* reruns, and the like—programming that unwed pregnant women are likely to see. They also provide a toll-free phone number that quickly connects callers to a nearby crisis-pregnancy center. Currently, the ads air for two or three months each year. By 2000, however, Right to Life of Michigan hopes to have them playing all the time.

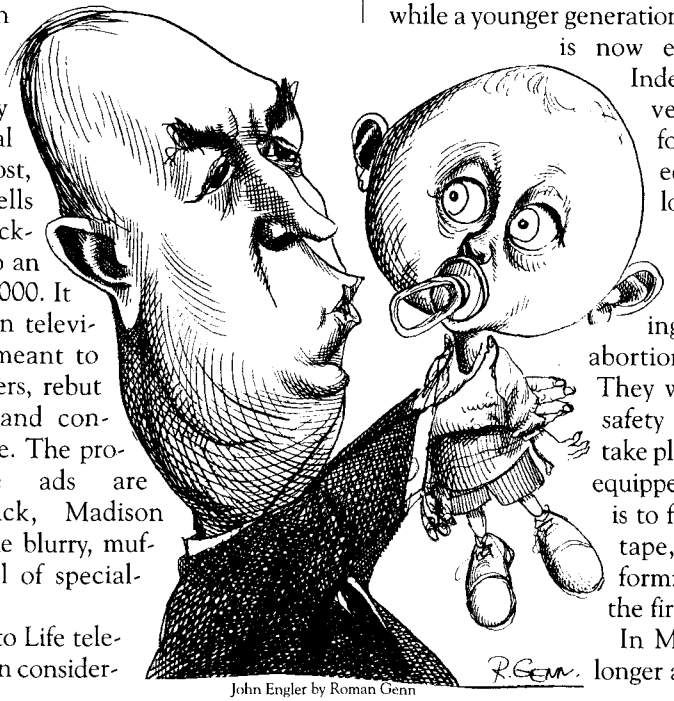
The Medicaid cutoff had an enormous impact. Michigan's abortion rate dropped by nearly 25 percent within a year.

This focus on women complements the latest trend in crisis-pregnancy counseling. "We try to minister to women rather than manipulate them," says Romy Crawford, development director for Pregnancy Services of Greater Lansing, whose storefront is directly across the street from Michigan State University. "The message is: Respect the mother, don't abort the woman in her time of trouble." Rather than intimidate unsuspecting pregnant women with provocative photos or fire-and-brimstone lectures, counselors try not to appear "judgmental." "We cry with them when their pregnancy tests come out positive," says staffer Sheryl Patry.

Michigan pro-lifers see plenty of reason for even more progress in the years ahead. The latest set of state abortion numbers, published by the Department of Community Health, reveals that repeat abortions now outnumber first-time abortions in Michigan. To many pro-lifers, this suggests that a generation of pro-abortion women is growing older, while a younger generation less comfortable with the practice is now entering its childbearing years. Indeed, the most recent national survey of college freshmen by UCLA found that only 51 percent supported keeping abortion legal—a record low since the first such survey was taken more than 25 years ago.

On the political front, Michigan pro-lifers plan to continue searching for a way to make a late-term-abortion ban acceptable to the courts. They will also probably try to pass new safety regulations. Most abortions don't take place in hospitals, and few clinics are equipped to handle emergencies. The goal is to frustrate abortion doctors with red tape, encouraging them to stop performing abortions—or not to start in the first place.

In Michigan, at least, abortion is no longer a growth industry. **NR**



John Engler by Roman Genn

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Against Mandatory Minimums

Drug sentencing run amok.

JOHN J. DiIULIO JR.

THERE is a conservative crime-control case to be made for repealing mandatory-minimum drug laws now. That's a *conservative* crime-control case, as in a case for promoting public safety, respecting community mores, and reinstating the traditional sentencing prerogatives of criminal-court judges. This is not a libertarian drug-legalization case, as in, "The inherently unethical and hugely expensive Washington-led War on Drugs has failed." Nor is it a liberal criminal-liberation case: "Most drug offenders behind bars, like most prisoners generally, are helpless, hapless, harmless victims of poverty and racism." No, it is a conservative case, and I will tell you how I, one of the few academic analysts with a kind word for imprisonment, have come to embrace it.

Where were you on October 3, 1995, the day the O.J. verdict came in? I was in Albany, speaking before law-enforcement officials at a governor's forum. I concluded my address by arguing that New York, which in the 1970s led the nation in passing stern mandatory-minimum drug laws, should lead it again by repealing them.

New York, like most states, has a complex criminal code that includes several dozen specific laws prohibiting the possession or sale of various "dangerous drugs" and "controlled substances," and prescribing criminal penalties, including mandatory prison terms of a certain number of years. Most of these laws (including a few that germinated as "public health" laws) were enacted between 1973 and 1986. Over the years, many of them have been repealed or revised.

New York's two most resilient repositories of mandatory anti-drug laws are the Rockefeller Drug Law (RDL) and the Second Felony Offender Law (SFOL). Together, the two have earned New York its reputation as the state with the "toughest drug laws in the country."

Signed with gusto by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller in 1973, the RDL mandated terms of 15 years to life for numerous drug-trafficking crimes based largely on the weight of the drug sold. As criminal-justice historian Lawrence M. Friedman has noted, the RDL was controversial from the first, and "the legislature, in essence, got rid of it in 1979." But both the letter and the "essence" of the RDL's mandatory-sentencing regime survived in parts of the state's criminal code, including the SFOL.

A RISING TIDE

Also enacted in 1973, the SFOL requires with some exceptions a mandatory state-prison term for persons convicted of a second felony offense. In 1993, 67 percent of those committed to prison for drug offenses in New York were sentenced under the SFOL. In their first 20 years, the SFOL, the RDL, and other anti-drug laws combined for a steep and steady rise in the portion of incoming prisoners whose last convicted crime was a drug felony. In 1980, a drug crime was the most serious conviction offense of 11 percent of the state's prisoners (886 people). By 1993, that fraction had risen to 44 percent (10,939 people).

On the day of the O.J. verdict, I strongly suspected something of which, owing to research I have recently completed with Harvard economist Anne Morrison Piehl and University of New Mexico sociologist Bert Useem, I now feel certain: Since the mid 1990s, a large fraction of New York's incoming prison population has consisted of offenders whose only past felony crimes, recorded and undetected, were genuinely low-level, nonviolent drug crimes. Many of these "drug-only offenders," as we term them, are themselves drug abusers or addicts who have never been in a well-structured, no-nonsense, community-anchored substance-abuse program.

New York is not alone. My first suspicions about drug-only prisoners were reported in a 1995 article co-authored with Piehl and published in the *Brookings Review*. As advisor to New Jersey's Sentencing Policy Commission in 1993 and '94, I and other Princeton researchers were able to survey the state's inmates, study its criminal and corrections data, and conduct interviews with key lawmakers, law-enforcement officials, judges, probation officers, and others. Based on that research, Piehl and I concluded that perhaps 15 percent or more of the state's incoming prisoners were drug-only offenders.

But our New Jersey study, like one we had previously done in Wisconsin, was not really designed to get cleanly at our

Mr. Dilulio is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and was recently appointed Fox Leadership Professor of Politics, Religion, and Civil Society at the University of Pennsylvania.

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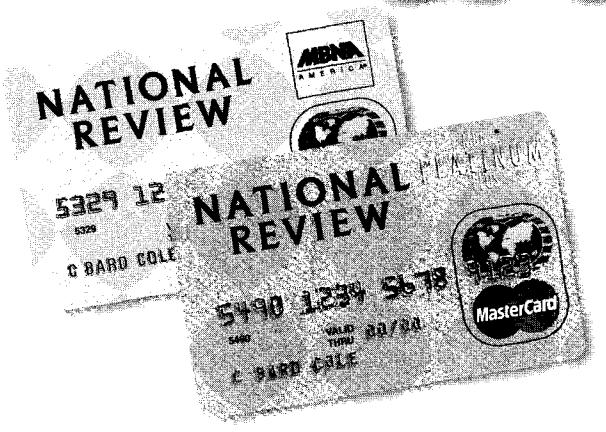

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questions about the incarceration of drug-only offenders. So with Useem we modified our design accordingly. During the first half of 1997, we surveyed some 1,500 incoming prisoners in three states—New York, New Mexico, and Arizona—and undertook other necessary research. (A report summarizing the main findings of our study will be released this month by the Manhattan Institute's Center for Civic Innovation.)

Even by our most conservative estimates, we find that all three states are imprisoning large numbers of drug-only offenders: 28 percent of incoming male prisoners in New York, 15 percent in New Mexico, 18 percent in Arizona; and 49 percent of incoming female prisoners in New York, 14 percent in New Mexico, 20 percent in Arizona.

In 1997, 47 percent of New York's incoming prisoners (9,809 people) and 33 percent of all prisoners on any given day (22,670 people) were persons whose last and most serious conviction offense was a drug crime. If our aforementioned lower-bound estimates are in the ballpark, then at least half of the incoming drug offenders in the New York state-prison system are drug-only offenders.

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On its most aggressive day, the justice system incarcerates only a small fraction even of known, adjudicated, violent criminals.

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Most of the relevant research literature—in addition to street lore coast to coast—indicates that when one drug-only offender is incarcerated, another one assumes his sales and effectively takes his place. Our three-state survey found that, at the time of the conviction offense, under a third of the prisoners now serving mandatory sentences for drugs either knew that the penalty was in effect or expected to go to jail if caught. So much for deterrence. Meanwhile, ever more incarcerated drug-only offenders are drug-dependent persons. In 1996, over half of all local-jail inmates reported having used drugs in the month before their offense, up from 44 percent in 1989. Likewise, in 1997, 57 percent of state prisoners reported having used drugs in the month before their offense, up from 50 percent in 1991. For federal prisoners, the fraction rose from 32 percent in 1991 to 45 percent in 1997. With mandatory minimums, there is no real suppression of the drug trade, only episodic substance-abuse treatment of incarcerated drug-only offenders, and hence only the most tenuous crime-control rationale for imposing prison terms—mandatory or otherwise—on any of them.

Back in Albany, I was being neither brave nor ungracious to Gov. George E. Pataki. For one thing, he was not present. For another, he was not then unsympathetic to the view that, as he himself stated publicly during his first days in office, "Rockefeller drug laws have filled New York's prisons and have not increased public safety."

Each subsequent December, Pataki has commuted the sentences of several drug-only offenders serving long mandatory prison terms. In December 1997, for example, he granted clemency to three such offenders, including one Angela Thompson, convicted at age 17 of trying to sell cocaine to an undercover cop at the behest of an uncle who was her legal guardian. Both she and her uncle got 15 years. She was granted gubernatorial grace and released after "only" eight years.

Earlier this year, however, Pataki appeared to back way off a move in the legislature to radically reform or repeal the RDL. The political speculation has him fearing such a move at a moment when he might emerge as a viable law-and-order candidate for vice president, a fear heightened by his rocky relations with New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani, himself a crime-busting GOP veep prospect and a vocal take-all-prisoners advocate of abolishing parole.

Here's hoping that Pataki shocks the cynics, captivates the press, and puts his tough-but-enlightened-statesmanship stamp on RDL repeal. His conservative crime-control case for repeal should acknowledge that the RDL and like drug laws have always netted some drug-only fish and fried them with mandatory prison terms. As one veteran prosecutor said to me following my Albany speech, early on these laws functioned "like Velcro" for drug kingpins and other "really bad asses," mainly plea-bargain-gorged streetwise felons who had not been adequately prosecuted or sentenced for previous non-drug crimes. Over the last several years, however, the mandatory drug laws, conceded another big-city prosecutor, have begun to function "like hell," with ever more drug-only offenders "going inside," while equally bad offenders (or worse ones) get low- or no-supervision probation or, as some now say, "O.J.," meaning they simply fail to appear in court on drug charges, plea-bargain their way home, or otherwise get off scot-free.

THE NEW PRISON POPULATION

If you doubt such professional wisdom, just look at who's now on probation in most states. A report released by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics in 1997 indicated that, in 1994, 29 percent of persons whose most serious conviction offense was a drug-trafficking felony got probation instead of incarceration; so did 31 percent of those whose most serious conviction offense was a weapons-crime felony. Weapons offenders were thus slightly more likely than drug merchants to escape incarceration and get probation. In Massachusetts and several other states, about half of probationers are under supervision for a violent crime, while half of those in prison for drug-law violations have no official record of violence. From a crime-control perspective, forcing drug-only offenders behind bars while violent offenders beat feet to the streets is just plain batty.

To continue to imprison drug-only offenders mandatorily is to hamstring further a justice system that controls crime in a daily war of inches, not miles, and that has among its main beneficiaries low-income urban dwellers. With massive private spending on personal security and massive suburbanization, most Americans do not rely heavily on government to keep themselves, their loved ones, and their possessions out of street crime's way. Through courts, cops, and corrections agencies, government combats but never comes close to conquering crime, least of all the violent crime that dispropor-

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tionately afflicts inner-city minority households. Even on its most aggressive day, the justice system works like a sorting machine, incarcerating only a small fraction even of known, adjudicated, violent criminals.

In 1994, Americans experienced some 4.2 million murders, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults. That same year, states convicted about 146,000 persons for these violent crimes, but sent only about 95,000 of them to prison. Between 1980 and 1994, the nation's prison population increased by 213 percent; but the probation population increased by exactly the same percentage. By 1996, there were a million people in prison, and 3.3 million on probation.

From 1960 to 1980, the nation underwent a bout of prison bulimia during which the ratio of prison admissions to arrests for serious crimes fell. From 1980 to the present, however, the nation has undergone a steady prison expansion targeted mainly on violent felons. Thus, between 1990 and 1997, violent offenders accounted for 50 percent of the increase in the nation's prison population, and all types of drug offenders for 25 percent. Truth-in-sentencing laws pushed the average time served by released prisoners convicted of murder, rape, robbery, or aggravated assault from 43 months in 1993 to 49 months in 1997. For all types of prisoners, the average time served increased from 22 months in 1990 to 25 months in 1996. The increase was neither huge nor particularly punitive, but it averted millions of street crimes and thousands of mortal wounds.

But where drug-only offenders are concerned, in the late 1990s we have gone from prison bulimia to a prison binge that is putting drug-only offenders behind bars with seemingly petty but dangerous "drug offenders" and repeat violent felons.

In a 1996 study I conducted with George Mitchell of the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, we reconstructed almost the entire adult and juvenile criminal histories of a sample of prisoners from Milwaukee County. Take the case of the prisoner serving two years for "possession WITD" (with intent to distribute) a tenth of a gram of cocaine. He had five prior arrests, three prior incarcerations, and was a habitual parole and probation violator. He began building his diversified criminal portfolio with juvenile burglaries. He leavened it as an adult with occasional armed robberies. His presentence investigation report stated that he "seems to rationalize his behavior and blames his drug usage as being the reason why he has engaged in new criminal behavior." The agent who wrote the report would have none of it, charging this "drug offender" with "a blatant disregard of the community."

Few citizens would shed a tear or withhold a dollar if mandatory-minimum drug laws ensured that such a career criminal could not con yet another judge or probation officer into brokering his release in the name of rehabilitation or community-based treatment.

But look at the flip side. Look, for example, at the estimated half of all "drug offenders" entering New York prisons who are much closer to being drug-only offenders than they are to being violent and chronic felons in petty drug possessor's clothing.

You be the judge. A career drug addict comes before you on

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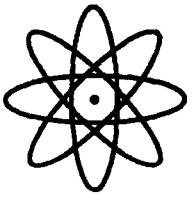

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his second conviction for a drug sale. You read the pre-sentence investigation report. You learn that in Brooklyn and other parts of town, district attorneys and others have run remarkably effective "coerced abstinence" community-based programs. You know that these programs are not cheap, but generally do not cost as much, all told, as a year of incarceration. You entertain the probation officer's recommendation for a non-prison term featuring mandatory drug treatment.

On second thought, don't be the judge, because even real judges can't be. Don't bother imagining what the pre-sentence investigation report reveals about the offender, because a real report doesn't get consulted for purposes of sentencing anyway. And don't try to require community-supervised drug treatment as a condition of probation, because the law man-

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After World War II, the broad sentencing power afforded judges was progressively harnessed to psychobabble theories.

■

dates that this pathetic two-time drug-only loser do 15 years to life in prison.

How did this happen? One last "don't": Don't join the critics in carping about how mandatory-minimum laws swallowed judicial discretion in favor of sentencing penalties set by the legislature, at least not until you suffer my little interpretive history of the rise and demise of their opposite numbers, the so-called indeterminate sentencing regimes.

After World War II, the broad sentencing discretion traditionally afforded to judges was progressively harnessed to psychobabble theories of criminal rehabilitation. By the 1960s, many criminal-court judges in New York and other states did the bidding of law professors and policy elites who were openly contemptuous of popular crime-control demands. Take the Model Criminal Code. Adopted by the American Law Institute in 1962, it explicitly rejected punishment as a purpose of the justice system. Henceforth adult criminals were to be "disposed" or "treated," not "punished." (The impact on the juvenile justice system was even worse, but that's another story.)

As indeterminate sentencing incarnate, right-thinking judges with virtually unlimited discretion were not simply to weigh a convicted criminal's *mens rea* as per the Anglo-American legal tradition. They were also to divine whether the criminal's willful, reckless, or malicious conduct was his fault or society's. When in doubt, they could split the difference and the sentence, then proceed to tailor from the bench whatever rehabilitation program and however many years—one to five, two to fifteen, whatever—they imagined the criminal's condition dictated. So between breakfast and lunch, courts all across the country were imposing radically different sentences on sane persons who, to the uninitiated eye, had committed virtually identical crimes under remarkably kindred life circumstances. The only uniform results were uniformly high prisoner recidivism rates and uniform growth in the discretionary power of parole boards.

By the late 1960s, some critics of indeterminate sentencing had come close to confessing that the system had defiled judicial discretion and become what they loathed: namely, not an applied legal science of rehabilitation, but a cesspool of arbitrary and disparate punishment. They consoled themselves that, if such was the price for rolling back Puritanical or otherwise intellectually retrograde views of crime and punishment, it was a price worth paying. They—or, rather, average Americans, especially those in the big cities—paid this price in the coin of unprecedented rates of criminal victimization.

In the end, the experts and their judges refused to concede that, while the justice system has a clear ethical and prudential stake in reforming criminals and returning them to their local communities as decent, law-abiding citizens, its two primary purposes lie elsewhere: first, to promote public safety by cost-effectively detecting, convicting, and, as necessary, restraining a small but significant fraction of persons who have criminally violated or threatened life, liberty, or property; and second, to exact in the bargain not only a significant measure of criminal deterrence, but a just measure of criminal punishment for the transgression of the legal rights of others, with such punishment to be set and executed through the sovereign moral agency of the people's courts, and administered by appointed representatives of the offended commonwealth.

As political scientist William Mayer has documented, in the 1970s an increasingly frustrated, frightened, and conservative-minded public demanded that its elected leaders regain control of crime control. As Lawrence Friedman notes, their favorite tools included new laws mandating punishment, often in the form of imprisonment: "Use a gun, go to prison"; "sell a drug, go to jail"; and so on.

It was a net good while it lasted, but the pendulum has now swung too far away from traditional judicial discretion, not only in the states but most assuredly at the federal level as well, and especially where drug crimes are concerned. In their new book on sentencing guidelines in the federal courts, former federal prosecutor Kate Stith and federal judge Jose A. Cabranes detail how this "fear of judging" has packed federal prisons—largely, I would surmise, with drug-only offenders.

There is also a socially divisive racial rub to the RDL and all its mandatory-minimum kin. Over the years, I have written in defense of the proposition that there is little or no evidence of systematic racial disparities in post-1976 criminal sentencing. In its 1998 report, even the president's Initiative on Race conceded that "all or most of the differences in the likelihood of conviction and imprisonment can be explained" by factors other than racial discrimination, "such as severity of crime or prior record of the offender."

Still, in 1997, about 95 percent of all persons in New York prisons whose last and most serious conviction was for a drug offense were black or Hispanic. Most people in the communities from which these prisoners tend to come strongly oppose drug legalization and want drug dealers routed from street corners. By the same token, most of them strongly favor drug treatment and do not support the long-term imprisonment of their drug-only-offending neighbors. Their prefer-

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ences ought to register in new public anti-drug laws that mandate community-supervised sentences and treatment.

Will repeal happen? Legalization proponents, like the editors of this magazine (see "The War on Drugs Is Lost," February 12, 1996), do as much to burden as to brighten the prospects for repeal. Despite registering many sensible caveats and qualifications (for example, NR editor-at-large William F. Buckley Jr. favors stiff sentences for sales to minors and admits uncertainty about how far we really can and should go with legalization), they too often characterize all persons incarcerated for drug crimes as casualties of the War on Drugs. Likewise, they generally fail to acknowledge that, whether at an acceptable human and financial cost or not (therein dwelleth the real debate), law enforcement definitely adds to the potential risks, and limits the potential rewards, of illicit narcotics consumption and sales.

GET REAL

Legalizers and their favorite free-market economists are entitled an occasional vacation from the rudimentary implications of price theory. They can be forgiven, too, for a lack of firsthand familiarity with open-air drug markets, which steal public spaces and disrupt daily life. They can even be suffered as they inveigh against the billions of dollars we spend each year on the enforcement part of the War on Drugs, though we spend barely 3 cents of every government dollar on all federal, state, and local justice-system functions combined. But gentlemen, please, get real.

My dear friend Ethan Nadelmann, director of New York's Lindesmith Center and the nation's foremost advocate of harm-reduction policies, once posed with admirable precision what to me remains the key unanswered drug-war query: What is the size and composition of the population for whom continued enforcement of the anti-drug laws represents the principal bulwark between an abstemious relationship with drugs and a self- or other-destructive relationship with them? Stated differently and with a drug warrior's twist, How many more persons would use or abuse drugs were they legal, and which socioeconomic and demographic strata of our society would be most adversely affected? Nobody—not Nadelmann, not me, not anyone—knows the answer.

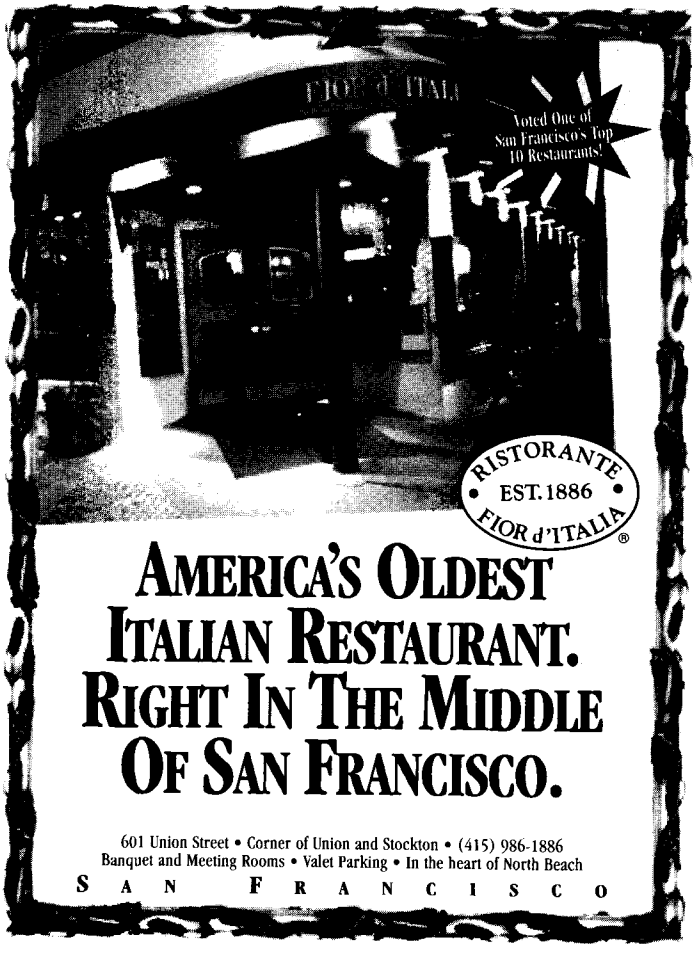
The conservative crime-control case for repealing mandatory-minimum drug laws neither turns on such knowledge nor need await the dawn of legalization. I repeat here what James Q. Wilson and I wrote in *The New Republic* a decade ago this July: "Attempting to suppress drugs is very costly. Some people therefore conclude that we must eliminate all the costs of law enforcement by repealing the laws that are being enforced. The result (they suppose) would be less crime, fewer and weaker gangs, and an opportunity to address the public-health problems in a straightforward manner. But legalizing drugs would also entail costs. Those costs are hard to measure, in part because they are moral and in part because we have so little experience with legalized drugs."

Notice, violent crime is down 21 percent since 1993, and we are coping rather well by most accounts with AIDS and other public-health problems that intersect with the drug trade. We have not legalized drugs. And we need not repeal all drug laws—just the ones that are clearly missing every desirable mark.

Fittingly, the most serious case against repealing mandatory-minimum drug laws that I have encountered thus far has come with feeling from fellow crime-control conservatives, including law-enforcement folks. They would have me fret that decarcerating drug-only offenders would undermine so-called quality-of-life or "broken windows" policing in New York City and elsewhere. I have even been challenged by several whom I respect (including my own retired deputy sheriff father!) to imagine what message the criminal classes of the big cities would receive if the cops stopped making drug-law violators, even minor ones, an enforcement priority, and the prisons stopped warehousing them.

I accept the challenge. In 1998, the New York Police Department had nearly 31,000 drug-related felony warrants on file, unserved. Thirty-two percent of all persons arrested by the NYPD on drug charges simply fail to appear in court. Philadelphia has some 49,000 fugitives from justice, many of them wanted for drug crimes. Lots of credible research suggests that effectively managing and treating such offenders in the community could cut their recidivism rates, avert tens of thousands of crimes, and reduce the need for prison space.

Now: Repeal mandatory-minimum drug laws in New York and elsewhere. Find the fugitives. Serve the unserved warrants. Incarcerate the really bad guys. Mandate drug treatment for the drug-only addicts and abusers. The message on the street, I suspect, would be that life may sometimes feel like a lottery but the law is no joke—and no fool. **NR**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RE: Out on a limb . . .
Dear Ms. Rodham:
It is a question that has bedeviled political minds from the outset. A chance to fill a Senate seat with an ally, if not of her husband's, then of all conscientious Americans. Without being pompous, let me ask you Ms. Rodham, are you running for the New York Senate seat? And if so, how can I help?
Ted

TO: tkoppel@disney.abcnetwork.news.com
FROM: hillaryrodham@hotmail.com
RE: RE: Out on a limb . . .
Dear Ted:
How thoughtful! I'm still in the early stages of soul-searching and fundraising. But I certainly appreciate anything you can do. I'm thinking one of your "town meeting" type deals. But can I hold the mike?
HR

TO: hillaryrodham@hotmail.com
FROM: ratherman@cbs.news.com
RE: Let's coordinate schedules . . .
Hillary:
Two questions: One, have you decided to allow me the privilege of covering your Senate campaign? And two, I am planning to be out of town for two weeks in late June. Would you say this is a good time or a bad time?
Dan

TO: ratherman@cbs.news.com
FROM: hillaryrodham@hotmail.com
RE: RE: Let's coordinate schedules . . .
Dan:
I understand your need to plan. (And thanks for the check!) I'm struggling with when to make my announcement. Part of me wants to wait until the Kosovo situation is resolved in a way that makes us look good, and then another part of me thinks I should just put Kosovo off limits, kind of like health care, Whitewater, China, welfare reform, and an independent Palestine.
But say I do run. Know any nice co-ops in Manhattan?
HR

TO: frankrich@nytimes.com
FROM: hillaryrodham@hotmail.com
RE: Vast right-wing you-know-what
Hi guy!
Just thinking . . . does the whole Littleton, Colorado, thing seem a little Richard-Mellon-Scaife-ish?
HR

TO: hillaryrodham@hotmail.com
FROM: frankrich@nytimes.com
RE: RE: Vast right-wing you-know-what
Of course! Of course! The whole time I was trying to fit the pieces together, and it wasn't working (too many pieces? the gay angle? the jock angle?). I knew someone of your intellectual power would be able to see the pieces fit into a coherent whole. I am in your thrall. I am in your debt. I am . . .
Frank Rich, at your service.

TO: hillaryrodham@hotmail.com
FROM: kcouric@nbc.today.com
RE: Hey girlfriend!
Hi hi!
Just wondering if you want to come on the show again. We had such a great time the last time!! And I know you've got a book coming out and stuff. Are you still mad about the whole Juanita Broaddrick/Lisa Myers thing? Just so you know: I fought that story tooth and nail. In the first place, it's unsubstantiated. And in the second place, isn't it time we all moved on? Call me at home.
Katie

TO: tkoppel@disney.abcnetwork.news.com, kcouric@nbc.today.com, frankrich@nytimes.com, ratherman@cbs.news.com
FROM: hillaryrodham@hotmail.com
RE: Your kind offers
Dear all:
I can't tell you how much it means to me to have you all working to make my Senate campaign happen. Your advice and help has been instrumental to me in these past few months, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.
I am almost ready to declare myself a candidate! After many months of soul-searching, a time in which I thought hard about myself, my family, and raised about 11 million dollars, I have come to believe that New York needs me.
But who will rid me of this troublesome mayor?
HR

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ALL THE KING'S BOOKS

She's America's Misanthrope. She's the Queen of Spleen. She's Florence King. Now Get This Curmudgeon's Classic Books—Direct from *National Review.*

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Lump It or Leave It King gives no quarter in these acid-laced reflections on American tomfoolery. From the joys of menopause to the hazards of fame, from college professors ("incapable of earning a living with either their minds or their hands") and the U.S. government ("the crude leading the crud") to that favorite of subjects, the South ("if at first you don't secede, try, try, again"), there are few blockheads or brainless trends left standing after Miss Anthrope has her way with them. "The scent of sulpher and brimstone wafts off the page....venom on a par with Dorothy Parker's literary bite." *–Chicago Sun-Times* **$9.95/quality paperback.**

The Florence King Reader This wallop-packing, 200-proof best-of will leave literary livers cirrhotic as punch-drunk readers beg for another round. From her biting essays and *NR* columns to her icon-smashing reviews and book selections (including a chapter from her long-lost historical novel, *The Barbarian Princess*), this King-size collection is a must for aficionados and neophytes. "One of the few contemporary American essayists of sufficient pungency and wit to be almost always worth reading." *– Washington Post* **$13.95/quality paperback.**

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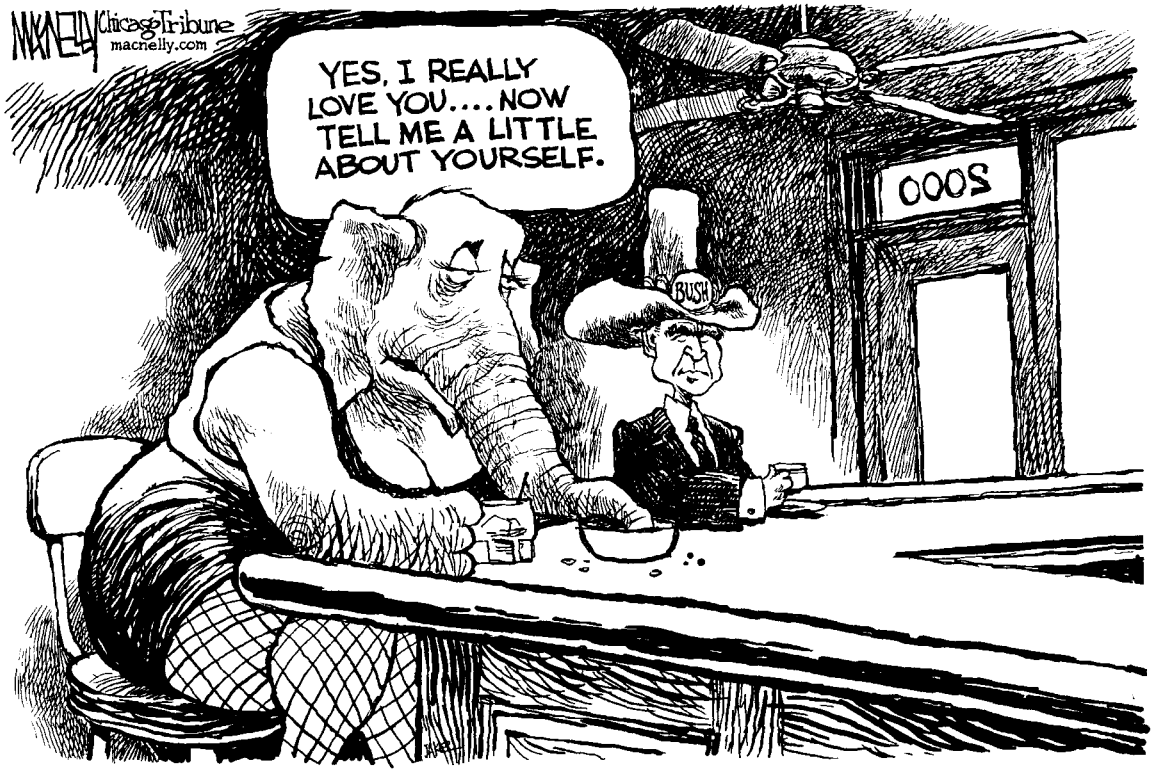

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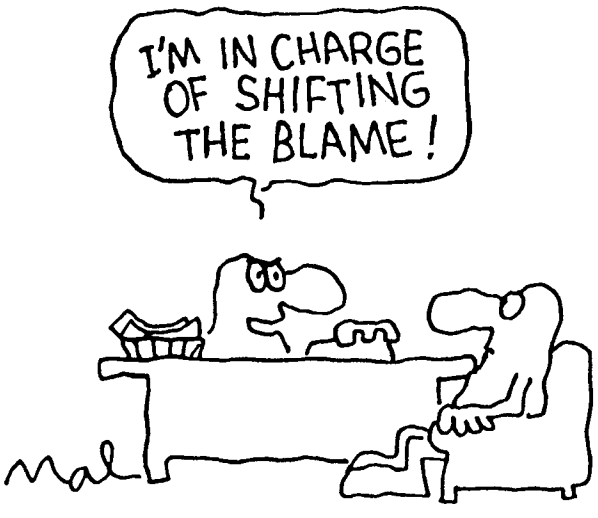

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"Of course I'm happy. If you can call it happiness."

Matt—Rothco

"I'm beginning to wish we hadn't named the little fellow Slobodan."

"Oh, dear—your baptismal certificate was never notarized!"

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What Makes God Laugh?

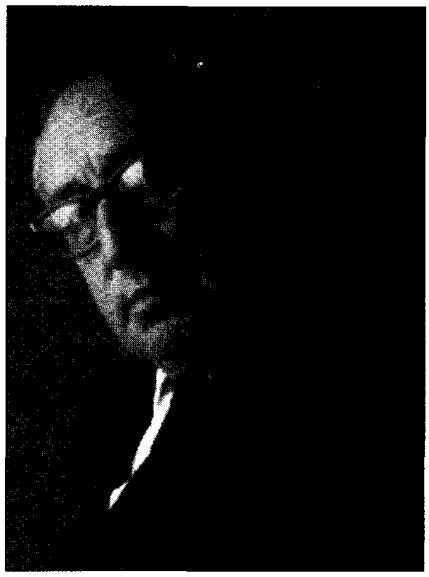
JOHN O'SULLIVAN

Years of Renewal, by Henry Kissinger (Simon & Schuster, 1,151 pp., $35)

TOWARDS the end of his third volume of memoirs, Henry Kissinger indulges in some reflections on the changing nature of statesmanship. These are characteristically shrewd until he reaches the argument that information has largely removed the need for style as an instrument of diplomacy. Where once the statesman absorbed history and a sense of perspective by reading well-constructed and precisely phrased diplomatic analyses, runs the argument, he can now retrieve all the information on any given topic at the touch of a button on a computer keyboard.

At this point, the reader has just completed 1,078 pages of Kissinger's stylish prose. Would he have plowed happily through the same volume of words, culled by an Internet search engine, to learn about the Cyprus crisis of 1974, the "new dialogue" (also of 1974) with Latin America, the "breakthrough" to majority rule in Rhodesia, and many other now-distant controversies? The question answers itself. History recreates the dilemmas that faced the statesman at the time in all their painful, absorbing complexity; the computer merely tells that he took Course A rather than Course B. It is style, clarifying choices and helping the past to live again, that makes the difference between the two types of information.

But then Kissinger has always been his own best historian, for the unflattering reason that he is actually less biased about his own diplomatic career than have been certain critics who are moved by an almost superhuman animus towards him. *Years of Renewal* is unlikely to remove that hostility. As other reviewers have noted, however, it sheds as much light on the author as it does on the events he describes. Threaded through the details of diplomatic negotiations is a melancholy story of personal honor preserved amid the self-destruction of America's honor.



William Coupon

This third volume describes the fate of the foreign policy that the author, as national security advisor or secretary of state, helped Richard Nixon to shape and Gerald Ford to sustain from, roughly, the 1972 presidential election to Ford's defeat in 1976. As Kissinger points out, the main lines of that foreign policy—the strategic alliance with China, the Middle East peace process, the arms-control process with the Soviet Union, even a version of détente—were all continued by the administrations that followed Nixon-Ford. Yet when he handed over the reins to Cyrus Vance in 1977, it was the common view that his foreign policy had fallen apart, with the collapse of détente, the rise of a new adventurism in Soviet policy, and the crippling of American initiative by the "Vietnam syndrome" occasioned by the fall of Saigon in 1975. And Left and Right, which agreed on so little else, were agreed that perhaps his policy deserved to fail because it was a Machiavellian realpolitik detached from the idealism of the American people.

If anything of that caricature still remains, it should finally be eradicated by this account. Diplomatic history is, of course, an education in the vanity of human wishes. Many of the attempts to solve ancient disputes here chronicled—in which so much intellectual effort and, yes, idealism were invested—either went nowhere or ended in tears. The Middle East peace process is still with us, of course; but then so is the Arab–Israeli conflict to which it is a seemingly permanent response. The Cyprus dispute, featuring some of the original disputants, is still on the international agenda. And Rhodesia has become majority-rule Zimbabwe, but is today a ruined country. As a character says in Hugh Whitemore's recent play about the Profumo affair: "What makes God laugh? People making plans."

Most of this final volume, however, is concerned with two questions that had momentous consequences and continue to agitate us still—the policy of détente with the Soviet Union and the fall of Vietnam. On the former, Kissinger takes considerable pains to respond to the neoconservative critique of détente: namely, that by treating the Soviet Union as a legitimate partner in world order, he was unable to call on the idealism of the American people to resist Soviet ambitions, weakening the U.S. in negotiations and compelling undue concessions in trade, arms control, and human rights. When Ronald Reagan sounded the ideological trumpet, directly challenging Soviet legitimacy, the walls of Jericho promptly collapsed.

Kissinger concedes that Reagan was right to wage this rhetorical war. He points out, however, that it was an accompaniment to—not a substitute for—containment, arms control, and superpower summits. The author him-

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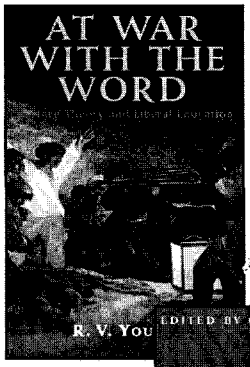

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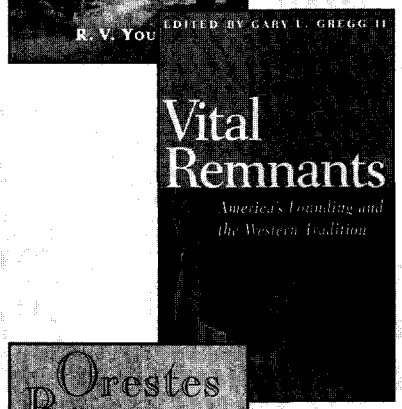

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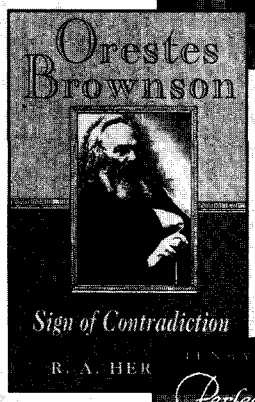

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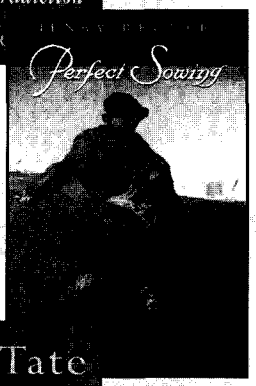

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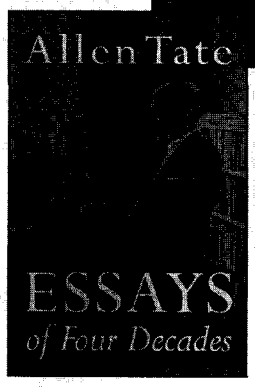

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self could not have carried out the same fruitful combination of kicks and kindnesses, in part because the Soviet Union was at an earlier stage of decay, but mainly because he was operating in more hostile domestic political circumstances.

Almost all of the Nixon-Kissinger-Ford foreign policy was conducted against the background of a moral civil war in America in which the liberal establishment had embraced the radical view of "Amerika" as a domineering and aggressive hegemon. The period described in *Years of Renewal* was darkened still more by the shadow of Watergate, which gravely weakened the executive branch in its relations with Congress. As a result, there was almost no political support available for consistent policies either of strong resistance to the Soviet Union or of prudent mutual bargains with it. The former were seen as aggressive, the latter as unprincipled, and both were seen as expressions of an amoral realpolitik incarnated in the secretary of state. Speculatively but persuasively, Kissinger argues that it would have been Utopian to attempt a Reaganite foreign policy when all the *Republicans* on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee were doves at best.

President Ford and his secretary of state struggled hard to save their ally, but also to retrieve America's honor.

What eventually happened, of course, was that the Soviets realized the paralysis of their adversary (by then adopted as high policy in the Carter administration) and overreached in Afghanistan, southern Africa, and even Central America. This adventurism discredited the post Vietnam appeasements of Vance and Carter and paved the way for Reagan's ideological crusade. As Kissinger puts it: "Reagan's eventual ascendancy was the American people's delayed reaction to the largely self-imposed humiliation in Vietnam."

It was, however, Watergate that had ensured that humiliation. Again speculatively, and again persuasively, the former secretary of state argues that South Vietnam could have survived if America had fulfilled its moral obligation to assist its ally with military material when it came under North Vietnamese attack. Even Vietnam doves like senators Frank Church, Clifford Case, and Mike Mansfield had given unambiguous backing to such support in the debates leading up to the Paris peace accords. Once the accords had been signed, however, they gradually backed away from their commitments. The leading media encouraged such backsliding with their fantasies of a "political settlement" supposedly obstructed by the "Thieu regime." (If there was a Pulitzer for journalism that facilitated genocide, the *New York Times* would now have at least two.) And when the North Vietnamese attack came in 1975, Congress cut off all aid to the South, dooming its ally and thousands of Vietnamese and Cambodians who had trusted America to death, torture, and imprisonment.

Kissinger's gripping account of the final days of Cambodia and Vietnam as seen from Washington evokes tears of sorrow and bitterness. President Ford and his secretary of state struggled hard to sustain military aid, not only to save their ally but also to retrieve America's honor. But a terrible disease of moral masochism had seized the nation—or at least the political establishment. Senators, bureaucrats, and pundits seemed actually to want the destruction of their ally as a vicarious punishment for America's supposed sins of overweening power. Crippled by Watergate, opposed even in its inmost councils, the Ford administration was reduced to watching helplessly as Saigon and Pnom Penh fell—and the bloodbath was set in train.

The secretary of state retrieved his own honor in those days of the locust. America's honor is still in pawn. Those who urged and engineered the abandonment of the nation's honor have yet to be called to account. **NR**

Poet of Peril

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Godforsaken Sea: Racing the World's Most Dangerous Water, by Derek Lundy (Algonquin, 312 pp., $22.95)

THIS is the story of a single-handed sailboat race sponsored by the French. In 1996, 16 racers (14 men, 2 women) set out on the biennial race organized by Vendée Globe, but tracked, this time out, by Canadian journalist Derek Lundy. The distance to go, 27,000 miles, time at sea, approximately 15 weeks. The course: From the starting line (at Les Sables-d'Olonne), head south, go around Antarctica clockwise, then head back to Les Sables to the finish line.

There are considerable technological amenities on board each boat. A Geographical Positioning Systems unit, of course. ("Sextant navigation is as obsolete today as the astrolabe, except for antiquarian enthusiasts who keep it up as a hobby, like riding on steam trains.") A radar, especially useful for detecting "bergs" (icebergs) and "growlers" (small icebergs), on those reassuring occasions when they actually show up on the screen. A fax gives the racers continual weather maps and permits outgoing and incoming communication, when it is working. A radio allows communication to Vendée Globe headquarters, to the boats' commercial sponsors, and to home and friends. The EPIRBs (two are required) are emergency radio devices that disclose the geographical position of a doomed vessel. By definition, there has to be enough food on board for four or five months; as for water, the sailors anticipate enough rainwater to eke out life from what they brought aboard from Les Sables. ("The sea's saltiness makes its water as undrinkable as sand. Saint-Exupéry describes how, in the desert, the

Mr. Buckley's new novel, *The Redhunter: A Novel based on the Life and Times of Senator Joe McCarthy*, will be published in June.

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stranded flyer would first drink his urine, perhaps a little blood, then gasoline or diesel fuel, and, finally, battery acid. Any liquid to stave off the body's desiccation.") If there is no rain, there is a hand-pump desalinator. One thousand strokes will give you one cup of water.

What do these racing boats look like? "I had to admit they were elegant—but as machines, like certain cars or airplanes or weapons. I thought they were ugly boats. I liked overhangs, sheerlines, tumblehomes, a little deck camber, and a sweet turn to the bilge—all the old design techniques that made a traditional sailboat beautiful, and seaworthy as well."

But Lundy got used to them. He contemplated "the ideas and criteria their designers had used" before he could appreciate "their own peculiar beauty. A little like coming to see the appeal of cubism if you are a realism kind of guy."

'In the Southern Ocean, [life] was simple and memorable. The path ahead was never safe, but it was always clear.'

"The weird boats had safety features. Safety at sea is its own aesthetic. I came to like these racing machines as boats. I like the delicate gull-like dimple they made on the water's surface with their minimal underbody, so unlike the traditional boat's heavy, intrusive penetration *into* the water. I like the more restrained and subtle curves around the edges of the straight-up-and-down bow and the chopped transom. I especially liked the way they looked as if they were allowing themselves to be temporarily and grudgingly held back by shorelines and the proximity of harbor breakwalls, before taking exuberant, speedy flight."

Well, then, what is it like when you get to the dread Southern Ocean, in which the sailors will spend the longest part of their journey?

One problem is sleep. "Eventually, single-handers have to block out the racket to get some sleep. It seems inconceivable. You're doing the right things: smoking down waves at 20 or 25 knots; stuffing the bow into the wave ahead; running with the low that's creating the big seas; keeping your speed up close to that of the waves. It's dark, no moon in the usual low cloud cover, only the phosphorescent curl of the breaking waves, maybe rain or snow, perhaps a few bergs or growlers about, spray driving back right past the stern, solid water regularly sweeping the deck, the boat at a 45-degree angle down some of the bigger five-or-six-story high waves, the high-decibel noise. And in the middle of all that, the sailor crawls into one of the berths, wedges into it behind a canvas leecloth to avoid getting pitched across the cabin, and goes to sleep."

The camaraderie of the crazy adventurers ordains that no matter the adverse odds, if you capsize, the nearest sailor will attempt a rescue mission. On one such occasion, the Britisher Pete Goss turned his boat around and headed upwind the 160 miles where Raphaël Dinelli's EPIRB had marked the spot of the capsize. "The mast came up very slowly and grudgingly out of the water, and the boat began to move to windward. Goss found that he could sail at five or six knots about 80 degrees off the wind. Remember what this is like: the five-or-six-story-high waves, some even higher; the topping crests, two stories or so high, with their tons of avalanching water moving at 30 miles an hour; the wind lulling in the troughs of the waves as the sea to windward blocks it, the boat losing speed and steerageway; the long, steep-angled climb to the wave top, the wind increasing in force as the boat climbs until, on the crest, the full force of wind accelerates the boat down the fifty-foot slope of the wave into the next trough. Goss couldn't open his eyes to windward and it was difficult to breathe. The noise was unrelenting and deafening, at a decibel level approaching that of a nearby jet engine. In gusts, the wind blew well into the range of hurricane force, and *Aqua Quorum* and her skipper endured the full strength of every knot of it."

THE rescue was effected. All of France was listening in on the radio. Dinelli was hauled bit by bit onto the rescuing vessel, his fingers frozen, his head waterlogged, and rested finally in the heaving pulpit. Goss set out to remove Dinelli's storm gear and found, hugged onto the

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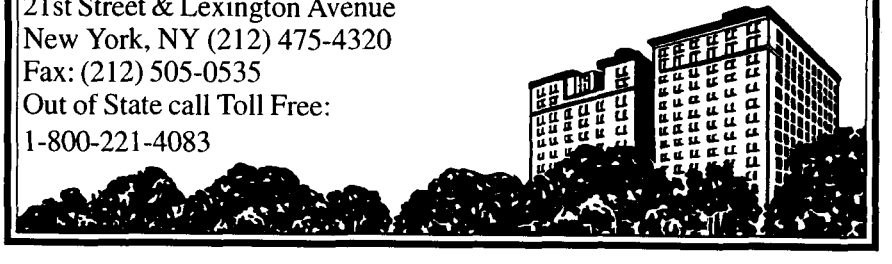

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survivor's chest, a bottle of champagne.

"The champagne that the nearly dead Dinelli had brought with him on board *Aqua Quorum*, and the cup of tea with which Goss revived him, were such unlikely clichés that no one would have dared to make them up. This was why sailors went to the Southern Ocean: In that uncomplicated, sure wilderness, usually corrupt humans were purified. Normal life—life ashore—was complex, compromised, full of ambiguity. In the Southern Ocean, it was simple and memorable. The path ahead was never safe, but it was always clear."

That terrible race with its hideous suffering deserved a poet, and found one in Derek Lundy. **NR**

Seth, Rhymes with 'Great'

JAY NORDLINGER

An Equal Music, by Vikram Seth (Broadway, 400 pp., $25)

It was, as the flacks say, a "publishing event": the appearance of *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth in 1993. The book was a huge, sprawling epic of India, one of the longest novels ever published. Some critics, without blushing, called it Tolstoyan. It was astounding not only in its tremendous sweep, but in its countless particulars, sentence by sentence. Here was a miniaturist—a poet, really—carrying off the formidably grand. Though at 1,350 pages it was nearly impossible to hold, the book skipped along like a sonnet. It sold a million copies.

Seth (whose name is pronounced "sate") had already published five volumes of poetry, a travel memoir about China and Tibet, and a novel in verse, *The Golden Gate*, about California. *A Suitable Boy* was thus his first prose novel, but, by making one of his main characters a poet, he managed to stuff it with poetry, anyway. Born in Calcutta and educated at Oxford and Stanford (where he abandoned a doctorate in economics), Seth has lived in points far flung. He seems to have no proper home and no literary limitation. His second prose novel has been awaited these six years with wonder. It turns out to be probably the most inspired novel about music ever written—and not too shabby a novel about love, either.

In an afterword to *An Equal Music*, Seth writes, "Music to me is dearer even than speech." Who knew? But then, one should have known, for his writing—whether in prose or in verse—has always swum with musicality. He has that literary ability that can only be sighed away as "ear." He knows when to write thick, he knows when to write thin, he knows when to soar on, and he knows when to stop. Always, he is in balance. And in his new novel, he tackles a particularly murderous kind of writing: that about music. The critic Bernard Holland once wrote, with due modesty, "I am helpless to write about what music is; I can only record the aftershocks it leaves behind." Music will always be uncapturable by human speech, but those who have been caught in the spell of music will note with widening eyes that Seth is able to call an extraordinary amount of that experience to the page.

His story concerns an English violinist, Michael Holme, a member of a string

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Every musician will gasp at what Vikram Seth has been able to discern and express.

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quartet in London. "Ours," explains Michael as narrator, "is an odd quadripartite marriage with six relationships, any of which, at any given time, could be cordial or neutral or strained." When the players lift their bows, however, they enter a separate realm: "We meet, the four voices, and enter a braid."

Michael comes from a small town in the north, where a kindly neighbor lady introduced him to music. (Late in the novel, that same woman relieves the general grimness with a stunning act of love.) He remembers the day she took him to a performance of Handel's

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Messiah conducted by Sir John Barbirolli: "He brings down a stick and a huge and lovely noise fills the world. More than anything else I want to be part of such a noise." So, evidently, does Seth, who writes as though he would quit his prodigious scribbling in a second if only he could be, say, third bassoonist in the New Delhi Sinfonietta.

Michael went on to study in Vienna with an eminent teacher, whose instruction and expectations haunt him still. There he also met Julia, a pianist and the summation of all his heart's hopes. But he suffered a crisis—a sort of breakdown over music—and fled the city, losing both his career (for a time) and, far worse, Julia.

For some ten years, Michael has sought to contact Julia, still in love with her, still eaten with regret over his leaving her, still, indeed, obsessed with her: "I see her with her eyes closed, playing Bach to herself: an English suite. Gently her fingers travel among the keys. Perhaps I move too suddenly. The beloved eyes turn towards me: There are so many beings here, occupied, preoccupied. Let me believe that she breathes, that she still exists, somewhere on this chance sphere."

She does. Michael spots her on a bus and hunts her down. She is married, with a child, and as unreleased from him as he is from her. She also has a terrible secret that she finds increasingly difficult to keep from the world: She is going deaf, forced to retreat into that interior aural asylum afforded by music. The two soon begin an affair ("Adultery and sin," thinks Michael: "ludicrously, there are no gentler words"). Eventually, Michael breaks down again, afflicted with a delirium stemming from his intense attachment to both music and his deity, Julia. Portraits begin to talk to him. He drifts in and out of dreams. Something has to give—and, of course, does. Seth smoothly resolves his story into "an equal music," a phrase plucked from an amazingly apt sermon of John Donne.

With this relatively simple tale, Seth roams the universes of music and love (and not solely of the flesh-tinged kind). His writing is a throwback, freely romantic, wondrously out of date, totally unhedged. His book attempts no cool, contains not a single pose. He can be playful with language, though not distractingly so: "I saw the letter come through the slot. I saw her slanting hand and tore it open. The lift. No. Stop it, recall him, undeliver this. Unpost, unwrite, unthink it." The book is also stocked with humor, which appears when it is most needed, as the story grows almost suffocatingly sad. Toward the end, Seth lapses into prose-poetry, then gives way to explicit verse: He clearly cannot help himself.

It will be complained that, in many places, Seth goes too far. He himself seems to recognize this in Michael's statement, "I make too much of much." His descriptions of Venice, for example, are nearly interminable, as though he has paid a visit there and must record every sight he saw, every smell he smelled, and every thought he thought. He does so, however, with the confidence of one who believes he can get away with it—and few will deny that his excellence of style and fertility of imagination are justification enough.

Into music and music loving, his insights know practically no end. Every musician will gasp at what Seth has been able to discern and express. Near the center of the book stands Bach's great, mysterious *Art of the Fugue*, composed for no one and no thing in particular, more like an offering up to music itself. When Michael and his fellows play it, "our synchronous visions merge, and we are one: with each other, with the world, and with that long-dispersed being whose force we receive through the shape of his annotated vision and the single swift-flowing syllable of his name." Ridiculous! Absurdly hyperbolic! And yet—as anyone who knows . . . well, knows—true.

Seth has by now demonstrated that he has just about everything (save, it would seem, seriousness about religion, which he tends either to slight or to scorn). He is 52 years old, and it is impolite to hail greatness while it is still living, or at least that young. But why not respond to him as unhaltingly as he responds to music, to love, to the life that animates his pages? As Schumann wrote of the young Chopin, "Hats off, gentlemen: a genius." **NR**

Rock and Rushdie

JAMES GARDNER

The Ground Beneath Her Feet, by Salman Rushdie (Holt, 575 pp., $27.50)

NOTHING by Salman Rushdie can ever be wholly bad. Like Pollock or Horowitz in their respective arts, he has been blessed with a style so original and beguiling that even when he falls on his face he is still eminently worth reading.

That, unfortunately, is the best that can be said for *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie's first novel in four years. As fiction, this book fails for all the usual reasons that novels of this sort fail. Rushdie is a "modernist," a writer of what Barthes calls *romans illisibles*. Thus he is pleased to challenge, rather than to accept as given, the conventions of traditional narrative. And yet, it takes a different kind of mind from Rushdie's to see beyond the exuberant license that this modern, experimental idiom allows and to embrace the severe discipline that it demands if it is to be done really well. Even in better works than this he has never displayed any conspicuous sense of structure or economy. Typically, his method is to spin yarns, often wonderful yarns, through episodic additions pulled together by recurring themes. But he can never banish a sense of opulent arbitrariness from his work, and this arbitrariness has never been more in evidence than in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

Salman Rushdie makes the fatal mistake of being too impressed with the rock-star glamour of his characters.

The plot is a postmodern reenactment of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. The internationally renowned Indian rock star Ormus Cama is a mixture of Elvis Presley, John Lennon, and Ravi

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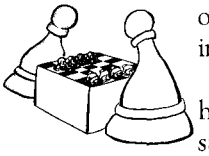
Shankar. He is hopelessly enamored of Vina Apsara, another musical mega-star and India's answer to Madonna and Lady Di. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a recounting of their checkered careers and mutual infatuation over four decades and three continents. From the beginning, however, we know how it will end. For in the very first scene, as Vina is making love to a third party in Guadalajara, an earthquake swallows her up and she is gone. After a detailed narration of the earlier lives of both of the leading characters, we find Ormus metaphorically seeking Vina through a concert tour called "Into the Underworld." Whether he has found her at last, reincarnated as the younger singer Mira, is left ambiguous. In the end, Ormus is slain, not by a group of raging maenads, like the Orpheus of myth, but by a lone groupie with a handgun. For Rushdie the Orphean parallel is the peg for a series of meditations on art, mass culture, and millennarianism. And yet, after reading a quarter of a million words, one may question the grace with which Rushdie has fitted modern reality to the ancient myth. Most often this parallel seems obvious, arbitrary, and more trouble than its worth.

It does not help matters that neither the principal characters, nor the obsequious narrator, Rai, are especially compelling. There is something interchangeable about all three: they become ciphers to be filled with Rushdie's musings on everything from geopolitics to comparative mythology to *nouvelle vague* cinema. As in most of his work, there is often real humor in Rushdie's depiction of these characters. And yet, he makes the fatal mistake of being too impressed by their rock-star glamour, something that, perhaps, he had originally intended to mock. He never sees them with true irony. And despite the arbitrary complexities that he attributes to them, he never succeeds in animating them with the emotional vitality that has so memorably enlivened his characters in the past.



The two dominating influences in Rushdie's fiction have always been Gabriel Gárcia Márquez and Thomas Pynchon. At his best he is better at being Márquez than Márquez himself, and at his worst he is better at being Pynchon than Pynchon himself. From this Márquezian element emerges the enchanted realism of Rushdie's best works, *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and its locus is usually India. It is this mother lode of enchantment that bestirs Rushdie to poetry and to deep emotional empathy with his characters. But the Pynchonesque idiom, never wholly absent from his fiction and conspicuous in some of the stories in *East, West*, is most often evidenced in a cutesy appetite for trivial wordplay and gonzoid conspiracy theories. And it is this strain that, for the first time, dominates *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. You see it in the need to call certain minor characters Basquiat, Schnabel, and Hulot, to have Ormus done in by a bullet from a ".09 mm Giuliani & Koch," and at one point to speculate in passing, and for no apparent reason, that JFK and RFK were assassinated on the same day and by the same bullet.

The Pynchonesque element in Rushdie's work comes into play most conspicuously when he turns from India to depict the West. One was not encouraged, then, to hear him say, in a recent interview in the *New York Times*, that "the subject of India seems to have gone away for the moment. In a way, the moment in this novel when the novel leaves India seems to have been pretty final for me. . . . the stuff I'm mulling around at the moment doesn't have to do with the East. It has to do with that very large part of my experience which is Western." Of course, there is no reason Rushdie should not write about the West, since he has lived here most of his life and since he is writing for Western consumption. Yet in thus shifting his attention to the West he enters a crowded field and, to all appearances, he has little to contribute that could compare in originality or beauty to his writings about the East.

All of these reservations aside, however, it would be unfair to suggest that *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is an entirely bad book. Rushdie differs from the Pynchons of the world in that, from page to page, he is almost invariably funny and interesting. Even if the grand strategy of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is, to be frank, dull and uninspired, Rushdie is one of the very best writers we have, as is clear even in a novel as flawed as this one. **NR**

Tales from the Farm

JONAH GOLDBERG

Gore: A Political Life, by Bob Zelnick (Regnery, 384 pp., $29.95)

GIVE Bob Zelnick a round of applause. Before he even finished *Gore: A Political Life*, he elicited a degree of hypocrisy remarkable even in Bill Clinton's Washington. In 1997, Zelnick's bosses at ABC News told him he couldn't write a book about the vice president. David Westin, the head of ABC News, wrote to Zelnick, as if it were perfectly obvious, "We cannot have a Washington correspondent writing a book about one of our national leaders whom that correspondent will

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Because Al Gore is smart and good, those who disagree with him must be dumb and bad.

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undoubtedly have to cover." What this says about the employers of Bob Woodward, Michael Isikoff, David Maraniss, and the scores of other Washington reporters who without controversy write books about the subjects they cover for newspapers and magazines, Westin did not say.

Zelnick was given a choice: keep his cozy and lucrative correspondent post at ABC or—after 21 years of award-winning service—write a tome for a conservative publishing house about a prosaic liberal politician, with no guarantees about where his career would go from there. Undaunted, Zelnick chose Curtain Number Two. And it's a good thing he did. *Gore: A Political Life* is a well-written, thorough, and surprisingly interesting consideration of a man widely regarded as the only per-

Mr. Goldberg, an NR contributing editor, writes "The Goldberg File" for NR Online (www.nationalreview.com).

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son duller than Warren Christopher.

Opposition researchers at the Republican National Committee won't applaud Zelnick's treatment of some subjects. He calls Gore's service as an Army journalist in Vietnam "honorable" (though not the vice president's subsequent embellishment of his war record). Gore's vote in favor of the Gulf War was "an act of conscience and moral courage." Nor does Zelnick dwell on Gore's youthful mistakes: smoking pot and inhaling—a lot; suggesting in a letter to his father that the U.S. Army was pro-fascist and that anti-Communism was a "psychological ailment."

On other points—Gore's shady campaign-finance practices, his sudden, retroactively lifelong mission against tobacco, his less than stellar reinvention of government—Zelnick's treatment is not unduly harsh, but rather duly harsh.

Take campaign finance. These days Gore is often depicted as an honest, hapless victim of sleaziness on the part of his boss. In fact, the vice president tracked plenty of his own Chinese mud into the White House. Maria Hsia, the lady who helped him set up the Buddhist-temple fund-raiser, has been a political and financial patron of Gore's since his days in the Senate. Zelnick presents a straightforward case that, while indeed there was "no controlling legal authority" covering Gore's misdeeds, the vice president knew his shenanigans were as kosher as an order of clams casino with extra bacon.

Unfortunately, Gore's assertion that he created the Internet came too late for Zelnick to write about. But another gaffe, often repeated by Gore, is a central theme here. Lately, Gore has been insisting to Iowa farmers that he too was raised on a farm and that he knows what it is like to "take up hay all day long in the hot sun" and "plow a steep hillside." Republicans are already using these statements to paint the vice president as the chief revisionist of his own personal history.

Zelnick defends Gore, who did indeed work on a farm, albeit mostly when he was on summer vacation from St. Alban's. Actually, what's interesting is *why* Gore worked on that farm.

Zelnick writes that Sen. Al Gore Sr. believed his son should haul pig manure as "part of his preparation for higher

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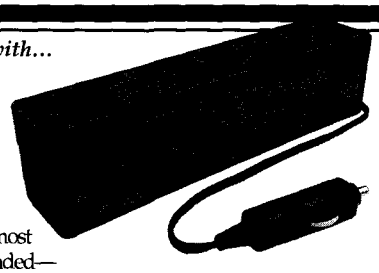

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calling." One almost gets the sense that his parents were caught up in some scheme à la *The Boys from Brazil* to create the perfect southern liberal president.

At first, Mrs. Gore wasn't happy with the idea of Young Al tackling that hillside, thinking it too dangerous. Eventually, she relented, saying, "Yes, a boy could never be president if he couldn't plow with that damned hillside plow."

Zelnick suggests that the father is the key to understanding the son's complexities. Out of a loving desire to make a president, Dad made Al a perfectionist. And, Zelnick writes, "the man who must be perfect equates nonperfection with evil."

This explains why Gore gives speeches in which he treats his audience like a dog who just stained the living-room rug. Because he's smart and good, those who disagree with him must be dumb and bad. (Indeed, in this sense he has far more in common with Hillary Clinton than with Bill.) At the NAACP convention in 1998, he equated opponents of affirmative action with the men who dragged James Byrd to his death in Jasper, Texas. During the impeachment "troubles," Gore said Republican voters were the kind of people "who call C-SPAN at three in the morning, not knowing it's a taped replay."

It should be said that as a father, a husband, and a friend, Gore gets high marks. On the other hand, it does seem that the man can flick a switch and turn off the admirable qualities of the private Gore in favor of remorseless demagoguery.

Thus, during his 1988 Senate hearings on global warming, Gore staged what amounted to a show trial. Handpicked friendly scientists were treated with kid gloves. Handpicked but outnumbered dissenters were barraged with loaded questions and smeared with guilt by association.

The most heinous example of Gore's willingness to "lie for justice" comes in the defenestration of his old Harvard mentor Roger Revelle. An esteemed scientist, Revelle had introduced "global warming" to Gore when the latter was a college student. In 1991, Revelle coauthored an article in the scientific journal *Cosmos* downplaying the risks of global warming. He suggested that more study was necessary before any draconian government action was taken. Revelle died shortly thereafter.

When the article received wide attention, Gore personally launched a sub-rosa campaign using friendly activist-academics to depict Revelle as a mentally failing old man who had been duped by politically motivated scientist-con men.

Zelnick himself had a similar experience with this book. Even before it was published, true to form, Gore aides tried to discredit what they couldn't disprove. Not having read so much as a page, they said it was just another manifestation of the "politics of personal destruction."

But the messenger-shooters were wrong. There are few cheap shots here. *Gore: A Political Life*, scrupulously sticks to Gore's *political* life. What is frightening is how political that life has been. **NR**

■ ART ■

Greek Tragedy

DAVID KLINGHOFFER

GREEKS hate Turks, so on your next trip to Athens don't say this out loud, but the truth is that modern-day Greeks basically *are* Turks, without the mustaches. As I'll explain, that fact gives the newly restored Greek galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art their heartbreaking allure.

The seven galleries were designed in 1912, but for decades their contents languished in dusty glass cases you passed on the way to the restroom. Three years ago the museum set out to restore them to their pristine condition circa 1917, and the restorers have done a marvelous job. A skylight was reopened above the main, barrel-vaulted hall, while three east-facing rooms are now lit by tall windows looking out on pre-war Fifth Avenue apartment buildings. Thoroughly cleaned and artfully rearranged in new cases or in the open air, everything glows with natural light: cool white marbles, dusky pinkish marbles, green-patinaed bronzes, terra-cottas of red figures on black or black figures on red.

The period under consideration is the sixth to fourth centuries B.C., when Greek art was basically about two things: death and drinking. Maybe a third of what's on display consists of funerary monuments. Prominent here is the distinctly Greek motif called a *palmette*, like a stylized palm branch, which can be found crowning many steles, or marble grave shafts, a design eerily suited to marking graves. An especially tall and lovely example, in a pinkish color vaguely suggesting dried blood, stands in the central gallery under the skylight.

The other kind of Greek tombstone portrays the departed himself but in a way that hints at a peculiar quality of ancient Greek culture. In sculptured relief, the dead person is shown as if in life, saying goodbye. On one stele, a little girl distractedly kisses her two pet doves. On a set of three steles, the departed sits in a chair, impassively shaking hands with friends and relatives. Nobody appears to be grieving. They don't even look each other in the eye. The mood is strangely calm.

Strange calm is a characteristic Greek mood. The Oxford classicist E. R. Dodds once wrote about visiting the British Museum to see the Elgin Marbles, which had decorated the Parthenon in Athens. A young man approached him and sheepishly admitted: "I know it's an awful thing to confess, but this Greek stuff doesn't move me one bit." Why not? "Well, it's all so terribly *rational*." To modern folk, said Dodds, the Greeks can seem "lacking in the awareness of mystery and in the ability to penetrate to the deeper, less conscious levels of human experience." His

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What's absent from Greek art is a dark side—the recognition that life is transcendently confusing and painful.

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Mr. Klinghoffer, an NR senior editor, is author of *The Lord Will Gather Me In: My Journey to Jewish Orthodoxy*.

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defense of the Greeks against the charge of shallowness tends to be undermined by looking at their artistic and literary remains.

What's absent from Greek art is a dark side—the recognition that life is transcendently confusing and painful. As the Met's fourth-century grave sculptures suggest, Athenians at the height of their civilization appeared to have convinced themselves that they had it all figured out, everything worth knowing wrapped up in neat little bundles. That is why they portrayed themselves as indifferent when confronted with death. The reasonable man has nothing to fear.

If you don't think the Greeks were a little shallow, then read their plays. Greek tragedy is supposed to evoke pity and terror in the face of divine retribution. But the stuff is so muffled in verbiage that a good paragraph-long summary of a play by Aeschylus is often more haunting than the play itself. The playwright seems to be interested mainly in dazzling you with literary virtuosity. Smugness is the dominant impression left by Greek drama.

Grave stele of a girl with doves (ca. 450–440 B.C.)

Greek philosophy, too. Even Socrates sounds smug in his famous declaration that he's wiser than everyone else because he knows that he knows nothing. He taught Plato, who taught Aristotle, whose work reads like the monologue of someone who's very smart but a very, very fast talker. He talks so fast that you can't possibly follow all the logical leaps—by the end of which he's proved that the happiest man is the philosopher, and therefore that he and his philosopher pals are dearest to the gods.

As for Greek religion, it is associated with the word "mystery," which meant a ritualized drama to be viewed by initiates of a "mystery" cult. The performance of the mystery was intended to reveal what happens to the initiated soul at death. But once you'd seen the "mystery" revealed, there was no more mystery. For Leo Strauss, in his essay "Jerusalem and Athens," on this unmysteriousness hinges one of the fundamental differences between Biblical and Greek religious thought. A key symbol of the Biblical deity is a dark, impenetrable cloud.

The self-confidence of the Greeks in the power of their own minds to figure it all out is likewise reflected in the other two-thirds of Greek art at the Met: the huge bell-shaped bowls, called *kraters*. Early on they were decorated with black figures, typically mythological, on a red background. Then in sixth-century Athens the switch was made to red figures, most often depicting mortals engaged in household or sporting activities, on a black background. The potters realized they had hit on a really gorgeous combination of texture (terra-cotta) and color, and they stuck with it. One of the most charming of the Met's *kraters* shows, in red figures, a domestic scene: two girls listening to an older woman play the lyre, one girl with her chin on the shoulder of her friend as they stand there enraptured. It's like a candid photo from a fifth-century sorority party.

Greeks used these objects for the event called a Symposium, a fussy sort of drinking party where men lay around on couches sipping wine. The wine had been mixed with water, according to a precise ratio, in a *krater*. As they drank, they philosophized. Tipsy Greek guys, all under the heady impression that by the time the *krater* is empty they will have cleared up the mysteries of life: This is Greek culture.

Hence the above-mentioned heartbreaking allure of their art. Such a rational, civilized people must have expected

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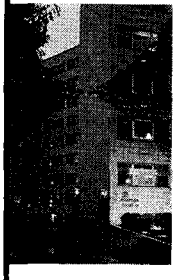

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it would live on in some form forever. But like the hero in a Greek tragedy, Greek culture was doomed by hubris.

Periodically, we're reminded that the ancient Greeks don't even have identifiable descendants. Each time modern Greece demands that England return Lord Elgin's marbles to the Parthenon, it is pointed out in response that these Greeks are not the children of the Greeks of Plato's day. Starting in the seventh century A.D., the latter were ransacked by foreigners, then either driven out of their land or more likely absorbed by the barbarian hordes: Visigoths, Huns, Avars, Slavs, and Bulgars. From the 15th century on, Greece belonged to Ottoman Turkey. Today, Greeks are Turks.

For all their self-confidence and reasonableness, the ancient Greeks were marked for extinction. When the Met's Greek collection was entombed under New York soot, their story went unnoticed. Exposed to sunlight, it's sadder than any play by Aeschylus. **NR**

■ CITY DESK ■

Urban Jungle

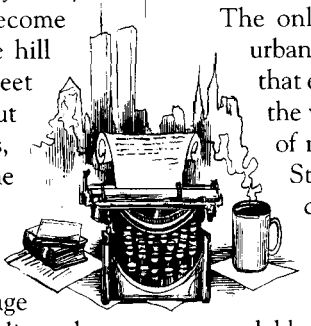
RICHARD BROOKHISER

THE city was preoccupied with a strange and exotic visitor—not Mrs. Clinton, our would-be senator, but the coyote.

Coyotes, whose lugubrious howl defines the badlands, have spread over the eastern United States. But this coyote reached Midtown. Naturalists think he crossed into Manhattan from mainland America over one of the northern bridges, then made his way south via Riverside Park. Between that and Central Park lie the apartments of many liberals; the beast must have slunk past them in the night. Your average New Yorker probably can't tell a coyote from Balto the Sled Dog, but Central Park's rangers could, and soon a massive animal-hunt was under way. The *Times* ran a picture of the coyote sneaking, like the Roadrunner, behind the back of a determined stalker. At last he was tranquilized, a few blocks from the Plaza Hotel.

New York takes an interest in natural irruptions because there is so little nature left here. When the Dutch discovered it, the great harbor was like Monterey Bay, filled with seals and whales. When George Washington arrived in a ceremonial barge for his first inauguration, he was followed (a detail that always makes my eyes tear) by leaping porpoises. Foot-long oysters used to be harvested in Gowanus Creek; now the only fruit of the Gowanus Canal is tires, which glow in the dark and are poisonous. Over the centuries, New Yorkers have drained the marshes, filled the gullies, shaved the hills, and straightened the coastline. When we finally grew impatient with the curve of Spuyten Duyvel, the creek at Manhattan's northern tip, we moved it and renamed it the Harlem River Ship Canal. Nature in New York has been flattened, strangled, buried.

And yet it persists. Because naked streets become hellish canyons in summer, the city plants trees. When one species succumbs to a blight, it switches to another. The current tree of choice is the Callery pear, a fruitless variety brought by missionaries from China. Its leaves are the last to turn bronze in the fall, and its puffy white blossoms are the first to appear in the spring. Every April, skanky East Village blocks lined with Afghan restaurants and jewelry stores that do piercings become cloud-banks. Just down the hill from NR's old office, the street that pours traffic into and out of the Midtown Tunnel looks, for a brief season, like a lane from *A Shropshire Lad*.



On summer nights, choruses of insects compete with car alarms and garbage trucks. A Swedish naturalist who came to the city in the early 18th century remarked that the nighttime din of tree frogs was so great that conversation was impossible. Very likely he was hearing bugs instead. "Bugs," I know, is imprecise; unless I see their taxi license on the bullet proof interior divider, how am I supposed to know their proper name? But whatever they call themselves, they make quite a racket. In July they are accompanied by fireflies, setting off their own inches-high fireworks displays, with what seems like special relish over the signs that warn, KEEP OFF THE GRASS.

Some species flourish here. Vermin, of course—roaches, rats, silverfish. Pigeons are pests, but they are wonderful, with their iridescent throats and their solemn, seemingly purposeful walks that always break up into zigzags. Peregrine falcons nest on skyscrapers and bridge trusses, feasting on the pigeons.

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Americans do their considerable best to tame nature and put it to use, but it never quite works.

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Sometimes abused nature hits back. The heat waves are the grimmest, although the whopper snowstorms speak with the most authority. The blizzard of 1888, which struck in March, dropped more than 21 inches of snow; winds piled it into enormous drifts. Sen. Roscoe Conkling was trapped for 20 minutes in a huge one in Union Square, and died of pneumonia shortly thereafter. An Irish kid, Alfred E. Smith, saw people walking across the frozen East River, just to be able to say they had done it. A few winters ago, we got even more snow, minus death and ice.

The only reason to go on about urban nature, apart from the fact that everyone likes to talk about the weather, is that it is typical of nature all over the United States. Americans do their considerable best to tame it and put it to use, but it never quite works. North America is just not a dependably pleasant place to live. In 1944, Denis W. Brogan, an English journalist, devoted several pages of his book, *The American Character*, to what struck a foreigner as "the savage possibilities of the climate." "It is no accident," he wrote, "that a great American fairy tale,

Mr. Brookhiser, an NR senior editor, is author most recently of *Alexander Hamilton, American*.

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The Wizard of Oz, begins with a tornado and storm cellar" or "that one of the most important inventions of that most representative of Americans, Franklin, was an efficient stove (another was the lightning conductor)." Americans need temperature control, and protection from acts of God.

This is the flip side of our feeling that America is Eden. Maybe it was impious to come back. D. H. Lawrence thought that the last Mohicans in James Fenimore Cooper represented the guilty conscience of their white supplanters. New York has an equivalent urban myth—the pet baby alligators that, when flushed down toilets by children who tired of them, grew into albino monsters in the sewers. There are no alligators down there, but the tale tells a truth: We are still fairly new in the neighborhood, and we don't quite fit. **NR**

■ **FILM** ■

Fortuna and Luna

JOHN SIMON

THERE is no denying that Robert Altman has taken directorial chances, and that some of them have paid off. But few if any Altman movies have impelled my second viewing, and quite a few have palled during the first. For me, his most memorable contribution to filmmaking is the soundtrack on which several people talk simultaneously, and much of the dialogue gets lost.

Altman's latest is ***Cookie's Fortune***, with the cutesy inversion of the title remaining typically unresonant. A rich old widow, Jewel Mae "Cookie" Orcutt, yearns for her late gambler husband, Buck, and lovingly fingers his handguns displayed in a cabinet whose glass door keeps mysteriously flying open. Her house, in the southern town of Holly Springs, is shared by a middle-aged black man, Willis, a friend as much as a caretaker, whose chief cares, besides Cookie, are catfish enchiladas, Wild Turkey bourbon, and hanging out in Theo's bar. He also regularly swipes bottles of bourbon from the local store, and returns them, supposedly unnoticed, ever so slightly used.

Cookie's two estranged nieces, living in straitened circumstances, are the artsy, ambitious, and domineering Camille and her obedient, somewhat retarded, younger sister, Cora. Cora also has a daughter, the sexy Emma, who hates her; she is a free spirit just back from an abortive affair in Biloxi and works for Manny, the owner of the catfish store. This clumsy fellow is hopelessly in love with her, even as she conducts a haphazard but passionate affair with young Jason, the hunky and clunky deputy sheriff.

Things really get going when Camille stumbles on Cookie, an obvious suicide, and makes it look, with the coerced collusion of the dim-witted Cora, like murder. The benighted police lieutenant, egged on by Camille, arrests Willis. It turns out that jail life in Holly Springs is no less unconventional than anything else. Emma, who adores Willis, using her 234 unpaid parking tickets as an excuse, moves into the cell with him, the door remaining mostly open, as police and inmates play Scrabble and such. Even that the nieces, ignoring the police tape, have moved into Cookie's house causes only a middling stir.

Almost as much attention is being paid to the annual Easter Pageant, this year offering "*Salome*, by Oscar Wilde and Camille Dixon," who directs and perhaps also made the posters. The

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***Cookie's Fortune* is a comedy of condescension, my least favorite kind.**

■

locals are having a fine old time acting, though one is worse than the other. Palmer, the town's only lawyer and Willis's defender, is Herod; the jolly liquor-store owner in an outrageous wig is the Baptist; poor, befuddled Cora, Salome. Hard to tell whether it is for being actors, police, or just ordinary citizens that the good folk of Holly Springs are least suited, as the two criminologists sent from the nearby town duly discover.

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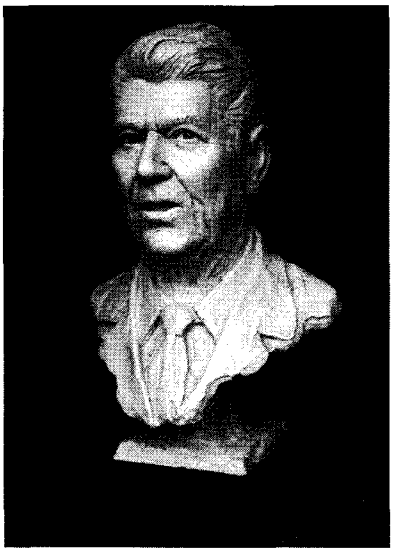

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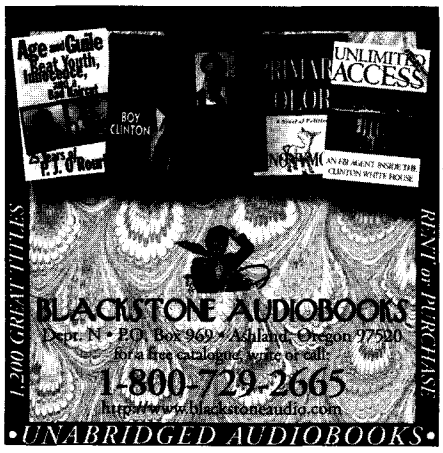

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you have for a story in which just about everyone is incompetent, stupid, or crazy. This is a comedy of condescension, my least favorite kind. Even in farce, which this is, some characters should amuse by wit rather than witlessness. The camera seems similarly mindless, paying equal attention to the gutting of catfish and the gutting of Wilde's tragedy.

Charles S. Dutton, as Willis, and several other reliables (Patricia Neal, Donald Moffat, Courtney B. Vance, and Ned Beatty, in particular) struggle gallantly; Julianne Moore is rather too much as Cora, made to look unduly unprepossessing; as the young lovers, Liv Tyler and Chris O'Donnell do what little is required acceptably. But even allowing for the excessive nature of Camille, Glenn Close's performance falls somewhere between gross and gruesome.

In this first screenplay by Anne Rapp, sensational revelations, believable or not, tread on one another's heels; but the one question I kept asking—Why does that cabinet door keep flying open?—remains unanswered.

■ It is rare for an American film about personal relations to be as sophisticated as **A *Walk on the Moon***. Like *Cookie's Fortune*, it was written by a first-time woman scenarist, Pamela Gray, but there the similarity ends. The time is 1969, the revolutionary year, in one of those Catskill bungalow camps where lower-middle-class New York Jewish families summered. Husbands, however, worked in the city and drove up only for weekends. The Kantrowitzes are such a family, with Marty working in a TV-repair store, while his wife, Pearl, is left with their teenage daughter Alison, little and brattish son Daniel, and fussy mother-in-law Lilian (Bubbie) to get on her nerves.

The camp routine is punctuated by loudspeaker-heralded visits from the Ice Cream Man, the Knish Man, and the Blouse Man, the latter a handsome hippie, Walker Jerome. He sells women's clothing from a converted bus and manages to charm even the ungainliest customers. When the extremely pretty and frustrated Pearl drifts into his purview, he bestows a tie-dyed shirt on her without any obvious hidden agenda. Such beguiling unaggressiveness and liberated clothing set Pearl, step by innocent step, on a new sexual course.

That Alison is beginning to date and acts rebellious, that Marty despite his wife's encouragement cannot be more inventive sexually than to grab two toy guns and pretend he is John Wayne, that Walker is charming and not the least importunate—all this and more contributes to Pearl's drifting into a heady affair. When the world watches the first moonwalk on TV, Marty does so alone in the city, while Pearl is blissfully in Walker's arms. But things come to a head when Alison, playing hooky at the Woodstock festival with her platonic boyfriend, espies her semi-nude and body-painted mother being lofted ecstatically by her lover. Adding to the ensuing crisis is Lilian's getting on Pearl's case and dragging in Marty for all hell to break loose.

The story is told with a fine sense of the little ironies and incongruities of life, as when Marty, amid his agony, remonstrates that Walker Jerome has a name that's the wrong way round; or when Walker, trying to persuade Pearl to run off with him, must instead attend to curing Daniel from a wasp sting and so earn Marty's gruff thanks. It's all terribly, funnily, infuriatingly real, down to every piece of music on the soundtrack and the outrage of the Jewish vacationers when some hippies come skinny-dipping in their lake.

It is a historical turning point as conventions begin to crumble, and also a fresh departure for Tony Goldwyn, a so-so actor who does handsomely as a neophyte director. The British cinematographer Anthony Richmond has shot with a nice sense of atmosphere, even though the Catskills are played by some Quebec mountains. Especially, heartbreakingly good as Pearl is Diane Lane, a former adorable child star who, as an adult, has hitherto received shabby treatment by Hollywood, which owes this refined, lovely, and talented actress considerable reparations.

But the others are no slouches either. Viggo Mortensen aptly balances Walker's genuine warmth and cool lifestyle; Liev Schreiber's Marty is deeply moving both in his clumsy loving and his helpless rage; Anna Paquin is properly headstrong yet vulnerable as Alison, and lesser roles are also well taken. Only Tovah Feldshuh as Lilian gives her customary overripe performance. A *Walk on the Moon* is as refreshing as a stroll in spring woods, and its love scenes—even those for its teenagers—are the most convincing I have seen in many a moon. **NR**

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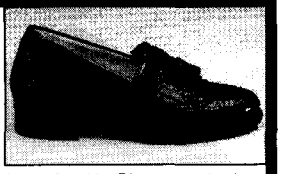

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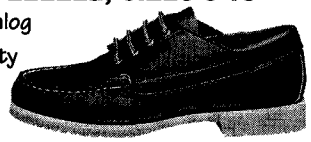

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Declare War? Pull Out of NATO?

NEW YORK, APRIL 13

On Tuesday we read that the *Wall Street Journal* thinks that Congress should declare war against Yugoslavia—a pretty solemn act for the United States, which didn't declare war against Korea (U.S. dead, 40,000, or Vietnam, 58,000). On the same day, presidential candidate Pat Buchanan advocated bringing back from Europe not only the 17-odd Apache helicopters and two and one-half aircraft carriers we are using for our offensive against Milosevic, but *all* our troops.

Since reconstituting Kosovo is on the order of reconstituting Carthage after the last Punic War, we are really left looking for strategic satisfactions. Hanging Milosevic would give satisfaction (*nemo me impune lacessit*); retiring Commander in Chief Clinton would give satisfaction. Milosevic is protected by an unwritten post–World War II commitment not to destroy entire cities. Since it is unlikely that we will send in enough Marines to scout him out and pack him away, he is relatively safe. Clinton is protected by a Constitution that does not deem it an impeachable offense to hitch the honor of the United States to a falling star. But Mr. Buchanan spots now a third strategic satisfaction. No doubt about it, if we were to withdraw our troops from Europe a lot of people would sigh that, at last, we had renounced the crazy international adventurism we began in 1917. A *Cliffs Notes* history of the United States, 20th century, would read something like,

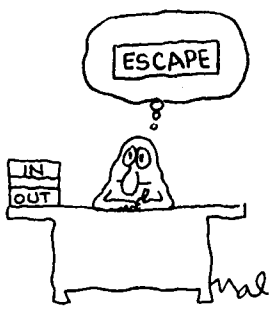
"In 1917, the United States departed from its traditional commitment to stay clear from extra-hemispheric entanglements, as counseled to do by George Washington, entering two world wars, a war on the Korean peninsula, and a war in Indochina. When called upon in the final year of the century to reenter Europe with a fighting force in Yugoslavia, public sentiment countered with a withdrawal of its armed forces from Europe and from Japan, and concentrated its defenses on naval and air weaponry."

That would bring satisfaction of sorts. So would a virus that crept into all modern weapons limiting their range to the reach of an arrow shot from a crossbow.

Mr. Buchanan is a superb polemicist. He knows how to make all the reticulations. What are we doing in Kosovo a) that we *can* do? b) that we *must* do? His answer is persuasive. We cannot reconstruct an Albanian Kosovo that lives happily ever after. And we are not required to make the effort to do this, in order to safeguard the United States. Mr. Buchanan adds that under Clinton, the defense budget of the United States has been trimmed to a level, up against the level of the economy, lower than any (3 percent) since Pearl Harbor. The impact of that straitening of our forces is apparent by the scarcity of Apaches and the need to bring in an aircraft carrier from the Persian Gulf.

But then the *Wall Street Journal* is also entirely persuasive in insisting that what we are currently engaged in—not what we are prospectively engaged in—is war. And the Constitution wisely stipulates that wars should be acts of Congress. The infrequency with which Congress declares war is testimony to the gravity we attach to the exercise. The further point is made that a declaration of war is a national commitment to total resolution. In war there is no substitute for victory, Douglas MacArthur taught us, which helps us to understand why we did not win the war against North Korea.

We are scheduled for an enhanced humiliation. At this point, we have failed to accomplish our mission but with no loss of life in the engagement. If we pursue the present course and send in ground troops we will suffer significant loss of lives and will inherit an incubus that will tax our resources and our will for years to come. The concomitant danger is a withdrawal into the illusory womb of continental security. If we withdraw from Yugoslavia on the grounds that it was an ill-considered venture, the humiliation (deserved) will be grievous, but transitory. If our failure in Yugoslavia prompts a movement to return all our troops from the area, then NATO will disband and



the scorpions in Asia and the Mideast will be enlivened, on the prowl for another Pearl Harbor. That would enhance the *Cliffs Notes*, if revised every ten years, to document the collapse of primary status in the world for the United States and the flight of smaller nations to embraces with other powers which, in the nature of things, will seek to occupy the ground on which America once stood.

It couldn't have happened to a nicer country.

Anybody for Moral Arithmetic?

NEW YORK, APRIL 9

We (ought to) resist facile references to individual human lives, even when used as synechdoche. Some time just before the Gulf War began, Arthur Schlesinger said that the campaign there was "not worth one American life." Last week Robert Novak said the campaign in Kosovo was "not worth one American life." To begin with one has to assume that a figure of speech is being used. If one could have effected the withdrawal of the Iraqi Army from Kuwait and done substantial damage to the Republican Guard that facilitates Saddam Hussein's aggressions and knew that the cost of that operation would amount to one (1) dead American soldier, it is difficult to believe that any pragmatic American would decline to play those odds. Ditto Kosovo.

But human arithmetic at some point does play an instructive role. And it very quickly gets tricky because one is required to calibrate human beings in ways that are plausible superficially, but not so plausible upon deliberation.

The first difficulty one comes upon at the immediate level, soldiers *vs.* civilians. Now soldiery can be, and for centuries has been, something of a blood sport. There are the great crusades associated with King Henry at Agincourt, in analyzing which the moral eye sweeps right by any consideration whatever for the French soldiers King Henry, in such stirring words, wanted—killed. The French Foreign Legion hired themselves out to engage in killing. So if such as they suffer great casualties, the moral reflexes are coached to lie down and forget about it.

But consider the present scene.

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Milosevic has armed half a million men. Although some Serbian troops have engaged in licentious savagery, we need to remember that this was so in our time of Rwandans, and Cambodians, and Japanese, Russians, and Germans—perhaps even of some Americans. It is risky to assume that because a 21-year-old Serb is in the army of Milosevic, he is an aggressive killer whose removal from the scene is a moral nullity. A lot of soldiers are soldiers because they have been conscripted as such.

In a television interview with Chris Matthews the other day, Joe Califano, former health czar, preached the need to restore the draft. He gave as a reason for this that the existing army, made up as it is of volunteers, shouldn't be expected to take the brunt of whatever damage lies ahead if we send ground troops into Kosovo. He illustrated his point by saying that 30 percent of the Army are black, while only 12 percent of the American population are black. This is a ready index, Mr. Califano said, to the disproportionate number of poor-boys who are exposed to danger. What Mr. Califano loses sight of is the word "volunteer," as in "volunteer army."

Still, we are engaging in human arithmetic, and the confidence we have in feeling no compunction about dropping a bomb on an army barracks while taking huge pains to avoid a bomb on an apartment building isn't really entitled to that sense of moral snugness we give it.

And of course it is something very new. Civilian casualties during the First World War were 10 percent of those suffered. In the Second World War they were 50 percent. We are totally trained that the bombing of civilians is barbaric activity, which requires us, of course, to accept the derivative proposition that Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt engaged in barbaric activity. Well, then, how should we approach a tabulation of the moral questions ahead?

If (this question is of course conceptual) we could place every armed Serbian in a single 100-square-mile barracks, would it be okay to drop an appropriately sized bomb on them?

If we get into a ground war, which we will have to do in order even to approach the enunciated goals of the Kosovo war, what would be an acceptable ratio in killing? One of us for 1,000 of them? One of us for 100 of them? One . . .

Inasmuch as there is no way to proceed on the ground without bombing target areas, inevitably "civilians" will be hit. How tolerable is this, under the new moral licensing laws of war?

In an effort to bomb Milosevic himself, could we permit ourselves to kill 100 people in his company, or 1,000? The bomb that was set off against Hitler, after all, killed a few in the room who weren't Hitler.

Does the whole scene present us with moral problems we haven't faced up to, let alone solved? There is much talk about the incompetence of our military projections, not enough about the desultory thought we have given to the moral questions.

What Does the Lack Of Art Cost You?

NEW YORK, APRIL 2

THE question comes up more or less perpetually: Is classical music going down the drain? Some of the indices are wonderfully buoyant: There are 1,800 symphony orchestras today, compared with 1,200 twenty years ago. On the other hand, classical-music record sales were down by 10 percent last year. Even the boosters acknowledge that one-third of seats at good-music events are empty, though they are quick to remind you that our halls contain two or three times as many seats as the symphony halls of the 18th century.

A development in New York City is of special interest to music pathologists. In 1975, the New York City public schools ended all forms of art instruction. No more music appreciation, no bands, no dance, no art classes: It was a great Philistine glacial inundation, and it lasted for 22 years.

In 1997, Mayor Giuliani, himself an ardent music-lover, ended the awful blight. Eight hundred thirty-five schools have now begun the restoration of art programs, enthusiastically egged on by New York's commissioner of culture, Schuyler Chapin, a starstruck music lover who once headed up the Metropolitan Opera Company and served as Dean of Arts at Columbia University. The auspices, in other words, are ideal. The interesting question:

—What about the people who were deprived? To use round numbers, let us say that 25 million people went through twelve years of learning in New York City receiving no exposure of any kind to music. Applying the Poundian modification ("Education is for those who will not do without it"), let us suppose that one-tenth of those students went and searched out music on their own. Another tenth (let us assume) got it at home, like the religious training the ACLU is so enthusiastic about. That still leaves millions who never got it. If they stumbled across it on the radio or on television, what did they do? Switch immediately to another channel?

Both Mayor Giuliani and Commissioner Chapin sing like nightingales when asked about music. But should one stop to ask: What does the absence of an exposure to classical music actually *do* to somebody? We know color-blind people (specifically, I know two) who are presumably deprived of the pleasure of viewing Fauvist permutations in art. If there are 15 million graduates of New York City public schools who never heard the last duet in *Aida*, or Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, what is the exact nature of their deprivation? What does it do to them? Anything? If so, what?

It is an engrossing question. We know what someone suffers from if he/she fails to learn to read. It is hideously obvious what we suffer from if blind, or deaf. We lie down early in life with the maxim that the absence of a cultural education is crippling. But the raw material has surely never been more conveniently available than, courtesy of New York City, it now is. Men and women between the ages of 20 and 45, millions of them. How are they distinguishable from their seniors, who were taught art?

It is too easy to say that special pleasures are there for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Is it a loss of potential pleasure we are speaking of? That only? Or are foreshortened aesthetic sensibilities in other ways costly? If you never responded with excitement from an hour with Verdi, does that mean that you will be less aware of—what? The sound of the lark? The beauty of the spring? The pleasures of Lincoln's rhetoric? And how do these deprivations combine to lessen your value as a citizen? Do they combine at all? Do you die younger? Older? Fatter? Richer?

The schoolchildren of New York owe a great deal to Mr. Giuliani and the overseers who have given them back what we like to think of as their patrimony. But we need to make the value of what they have now clearer. And we need to ask, sorrowfully, why it is that a city so large does without a non-commercial radio station that gives good music around the clock? Is the diminished demand for music over the air a fallout of the 22 years of neglect?

We know of a young scholar who is poking into these questions. When he has the answers, you will have them from this space five minutes later.

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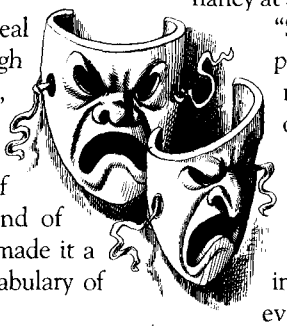
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

HAVE you noticed? America has a new all-purpose word: "surreal." Derived from *Surréalisme*, the French literary and artistic movement known for fantastic imagery, improbable events, and incongruous juxtapositions, it means "having an odd, dreamlike quality."

It got its start in the Gulf War when it was used to describe the greenish glow that filled our TV screens when we bombed places at night. At that time our all-purpose word was "awesome" but the rockets' green glare subjected it to overkill so some commentator varied it with "surreal."



It turned out to be an ideal Nineties word; foreign enough to qualify as multicultural, sensitive enough for a neutered poet, and, from the onomatopoeic point of view, its unmistakable sound of something writhing quietly made it a natural addition to the vocabulary of political correctness.

"Surreal" proved so popular that it quickly worked its way up the food chain—literally—serving as a description of everything from the nocturnal shine of crocodile eyes to Dolly Parton's bust. Its popularity was perfectly timed to enable us to describe things that really were surreal, such as the photos of Mars, but as the decade progressed the word degenerated into a synonym for "unusual."

Clinton's definition of sex, Monica's definition of love, Hillary's definition of marriage, Linda Tripp's definition of friendship, Lucianne Goldberg's definition of literary agent—all were called surreal. We built up such a head of surrealism that Clinton, to distract us from his surrealistic troubles, began bombing places at night, filling our TV screens with another round of greenish glows that everybody promptly dubbed surreal.

We always do this. Give us a catchphrase or a concept and we pounce on it, grind it down, wear it out, and leave it in pieces like a toy on Christmas morning without ever finding out what it was. This is how the Numbing of America works. It just so happens that we are surrounded by things surreal but we have lost the ability to react to them.

Making Americans react used to be a simple task. William Randolph Hearst ruled that readers of his papers must say "Gee whiz!" when they saw the front page, "Holy Moses!" when they read the second, and "God Almighty!" when they turned to the third. He could never get a rise out of us today because when everything is surreal, nothing is surreal—not even the following:

"The Navy has maintained that pregnancy at sea does not hurt readiness."

"Some female Marines are complaining they can't stand in formation at the six-month mark of their pregnancies because the Corps doesn't provide an ample maternity uniform."

"Arkansas agreed yesterday to hire 400 more female guards in men's prisons and let them do everything from stopping rapes to monitoring the showers."

"In some respects, companies view affirmative action as a helpful management tool to keep them from getting sued."

Don Imus on Mike Barnicle's plagiarism: "He's obviously sloppy and lazy. But you shouldn't be fired for that."

Laurence Leamer, author of *The Kennedy Women*: When Eunice Kennedy Shriver's husband was ambassador to France, a French secretary on her staff said, "If you're not mentally retarded, you can't even get invited to this embassy."

Surreal begets surrealer. The numbers-game charge that blacks have been irretrievably harmed by "400 years of slavery" means that slavery began in the 1590s and remains on the books today.

The "fighting men and women" construction of pundits bending the knee to the feminist thought police has infected the general public, producing letters to the editor with such statements as "the men and women who fought at Iwo Jima and Belleau Wood." Stand by for Veracruz and Little Big Horn.

When Michigan became the sixth state to allow the blind to hunt assisted by guides and laser-sighted weapons, Thomas Schermer, a blind hunter, said: "I might not be able to see the deer, but I'll guarantee you that in those last seconds before I shoot, my pulse will be just as high as in the days when I could."

We progress. Fifteen years ago William F. Buckley Jr. was universally castigated for saying that blind yachtsman Jim Dixon should not be allowed to sail the Atlantic alone. Now that institutionalized surrealism has given us the armed and dangerous blind, I predict that drivers' licenses will be next. If you doubt it, consider this: Icarus never said he had a "right" to fly, only that he could. This is the difference between American surrealists and the modest kind.

FROM surreal to surrealer to surrealissimus invariably leads straight to Mary McGrory, who eulogized one of the toads under the penumbra known as the Supreme Court: "Justice Brennan never was hung up on the Framers' intent."

The most publicized eulogy to Brennan came from Thurgood Marshall Jr.: "He had the biggest heart of anybody in the building." This is the sort of thing that should upset us but doesn't, yet on a deeply unconscious level it does, because even the most brainwashed American instinctively knows that nothing is more dangerous than a judge with a heart—or an emotional surgeon, or a vulnerable engineer, or those "flexible, sensitive" warriors Betty Friedan called for when she lectured at West Point.

So much surrealism is couched in these misbegotten tributes that we can no longer recognize chaos. The anxiety that afflicts Americans comes from the gnawing, inchoate sensation that we are all at the mercy of a society driven by emotional decisions, personalized actions, and subjective thought processes.

A regular reminder that the cold comfort of objectivity is a thing of the past are the terrifying TV appearances of Jo Ellen Demetrius, the "Jury Lady," who earns her living advising lawyers how to pick jurors whose prejudices, disappointments, resentments, fears, crotchets, tics, and twitches will result in a "favorable" verdict.

Gee whiz! Holy Moses! God Almighty! Will no one rid us of this surreal Vestal? NR

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